

JAMAICA "GINGER"



G.G. MARTIN



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JAMAICA “GINGER”



HE DARTED FORWARD AS BLACK PEARL CAME ABREAST.
Page 112.

JAMAICA "GINGER"

A Boy of the Days of Clipper Ships

Gatchew
By
Galloway
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BOSTON
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

1928

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JAMAICA "GINGER"



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JAMAICA "GINGER"

CHAPTER I

KINGSTON WHARF

UNDER the hot Jamaica sun dozed the port of Kingston, brilliant with tropic colors under the bright sky, oozing heat and somnolence from every pore. Not the least bright object on a wharf crowded with color was a matted red head, nodding against the shadow of a barrel. The head belonged to a lad clad in a ragged shirt and trousers, no shoes, hat, coat, or other apparel to keep the sun from scorching a body already as brown as though it had fallen into a big pot of coffee. He sat slumped on the edge of a bale of goods, hands in his pockets, alternately dozing and gazing out to sea with half-awake blue eyes, his feet resting on a small bundle in a knotted scar-

let bandana. A young ragamuffin, except that his face had a pleasant open cast generally uncommon among the hardened youths who hung around the wharves. After a while he roused, yawned, and looking seaward again saw that the white square of sail which he had watched nearly all the morning was rapidly nearing the entrance to the harbor. Shading his eyes from the shining reflection everywhere, he stared steadily, then gave a loud whistle.

"Bound here all right, and if it isn't the *Silver Wing*, I'm a tattooed maroon!" With which exclamation, the boy swung the little bundle upon his shoulder, although the vessel would not dock for nearly an hour yet. Wide-awake now, he turned and surveyed the land that had been his home up to that day.

The clustered houses and stores of the town looked friendly and attractive now that he was about to leave them, and he bade a mental good-bye to the inhabitants,

one by one, as his eyes travelled over the dwellings in sight. There was scarcely a soul in town whom he could not call by name.

The month was late February, and spring had claimed Jamaica. Palm fronds rattled gently in the light breeze, feathery bamboos and palmettos and scented flowering trees cast shadows doubly refreshing after the white dust of the streets. Past the town stretched a narrow green plain, and beyond the plain, their purple summits hidden in clouds, rose the Blue Mountains.

“Better look now—for all I know, I’ll never see it again.” He saw that the sail was much nearer, and it was without doubt the vessel that he waited for.

“Hi, there, Ginger!” A lemon-skinned mulatto boy with frizzly hair and an assured swagger appeared as if by magic from the midst of a coil of rope where he had been slumbering, and addressed our young friend by the only name usually applied to him.

"What you got there?" he asked, pointing to the bandana.

"H'lo, Lop! I'm going away!" Ginger announced the fact with much pride.

Lop's black eyes rounded. "Goin' away?" he repeated, not sure that he heard aright. Lop talked with scarcely a trace of negro dialect.

"I'm bound out for the States," Ginger told him. "That's the *Silver Wing* coming in now, and I'm leaving when she goes back."

"You're a-goin' on old Armstrong's ship? Ginger, you'd better work a plantation; that skinflint don't give his sailors nothin' to eat——"

"I'm not going as a sailor. I told you I'm bound out—to Mr. Armstrong. I'm going to Massachusetts, where I'm to work for him there in his home."

This information was too much for Lop, who first refused to believe it, then rolled on the wharf and laughed, his strong white

teeth gleaming like a chalk-line across his wide mouth.

“What’s so funny?” inquired Ginger loftily, keeping an eye on the approach of the *Silver Wing*.

“Friend, don’t you know you’ll die of cold the first day you land?” Lop squatted on his heels and began to rock back and forth. “You ain’t never been out o’ Jamaica ——”

“No, but I’m not going to be scared of a little cold. Don’t lots of people live there? And now I’ll see what snow looks like.”

The mulatto shook his woolly head.

“You’ve had a nice soft time,” he said, as sagely as if he were Ginger’s grandfather. “An’ you ain’t goin’ to like havin’ to work. How long was it you stayed at the sugar-cane? One day, wa’n’t it? And on the coffee plantation where you had such a good job? And didn’t Mr. Olden get you suthin’ and you run like the plague was after you?”

"I'm going to amount to something now, Lop."

The boy rocked on his heels and considered this statement. Ginger had spoken with unusual energy, and Lop, an old crony of his in their half-tramp, half-scamp life around the wharves, knew Ginger well enough to realize that he meant exactly what he said.

"I can't live off of Aunt Mally forever," Ginger went on sturdily, little wrinkles of determination gathering around his eyes. "She's old and lame and has plenty to keep herself comfortable, but not me, too."

"You can't eat none at home, considerin' the pecks o' stuff you an' me steals. I'm still full o' the oranges we got off o' Missy Lane's tree." Lop rubbed his stomach graphically, also ruefully.

"I'm sixteen now, and almost a man. I want to do something in the world besides hang around this old port, fighting and stealing."

"You'll be killed with work, I tell you. You ain't never done nothin', an' it's hard keepin' at it; you only stayed on the coffee three days ——"

"I know," interrupted Ginger impatiently. "But this is different. I'm a bondsman to Mr. Armstrong, and I can't run if I want to."

"Tied yourself up for seven years! You is crazy!" Lop rolled his eyes and groaned.

"You can't scare me," laughed Ginger, running his hand through his carrot hair. "I've got to go now. Don't you envy me all the things I'm to see? "

"Boy, while's I'm a-layin' in the shade of a nice palmetto, smellin' jasmine and roses and watchin' lizards scoot around, you'll be freezin' to death, and choppin' wood or haulin' water, or maybe worse. Work? Give me pizen, first!"

Ginger only laughed. The *Silver Wing* was docking, and this end of the wharf was suddenly alive with sailors, stevedores, and

negro slaves, all seeming to be shouting and directing, amidst a tangle of unloading cargo and a small shipment of sugar to be taken aboard. The air was full of the mixed smell of sun-touched pitch and oakum and salt, and the heavy odors of coffee and spices as they laded the vessel, and over all, the warm scent of a tropic island. The *Silver Wing* was at the pier only long enough to load and unload a small part of her cargo—the major part of her shipment on this trip was for Barbados, and she was making all speed to hoist sail and catch the favorable wind which was blowing steadily. Ginger knew he did not have long to wait, and he counted each bale of goods as it was shouldered aboard by the slaves.

He was going to see the world! To take the long voyage from Jamaica to New England; to land in a strange country, in the midst of new surroundings, new people—it loomed in his eyes a glorious adventure, and

he elbowed his way through a group of sailors, jumped over a pile of rope, and made for the captain, whom he knew well by sight.

A stern-visaged, short-whiskered man, Captain Brade was directing the loading and unloading, a rope's end in his hand, which he applied liberally to the backs of negroes and sailors alike, the while bawling out orders at the top of his lungs. Ginger waited, and turned to wave a hand to Lop, who was watching him. Then he surveyed once more the land he was leaving, a little feeling of regret mingled with the excitement of the prospective voyage.

Just sixteen years ago, a ship had sailed into Kingston, and among the few who landed there were two forlorn passengers—a young widow and her baby. She was Ginger's mother, Mrs. Wade, come to live with her brother, who owned a small spice plantation. Ginger had only a vague recollection of a pretty young woman in white

hoop-skirts, who used to brush and comb his tightly curled hair and call him her little Ginger, "the spice of my life," all with much happy laughter and petting.

They had lived in a pleasant vine-covered bungalow overrun with flowers, and in the drowsy days of Jamaican life Ginger grew like a young weed. His mother did not have a great deal of money, and she just stayed at home most of the time sitting on the cool veranda doing fancy-work. Ginger remembered that he used to run up to her as she sat there with various treasures he had collected—shells and bits of coral and strange plants. The recollections of that bungalow were not very clear, and he only thought of those first years once in a while when something reminded him of his mother. When he was old enough to run away from the confines of the garden and explore the streets of Kingston, she died, and there was no one left save his old slave mammy, Aunt Mally. Of his uncle, the

boy knew almost nothing, except that he had lost his plantation through neglect in operating it, taken to rum, and died over in Haiti, whither he had drifted. Ginger's mother freed Aunt Mally just before her death, and gave her a small plot of ground and a tiny house in which to be comfortable after long years of servitude. It was in this white stone cottage, with its roof covered with purple-red bougainvillea, that the orphan grew up. Standing on the crowded dock above the blue water, he moved instinctively in that direction, although he could not see his home.

Once he had tamed a dove with a broken wing, and knocked together a cote for it in the logwood tree in his yard; and he had sprawled in the heat under the tangle of pink begonias and white jasmine, times without number, lazily following the dart of the tiny green humming-birds. Aunt Mally called him "good-for-nothin' no-account," cheerfully fed him, and saw that

he always had at least the minimum of clothing—ragged patched shirt and trousers. She gave him the use of a bare room with a dried-grass tick on the floor and in good-natured indolence allowed all responsibility to end there.

Ginger had brought himself up on the docks, fighting numerous battles along the way with those who had made fun of his hair, and finally establishing himself, by dint of fists and grit, in the respect of his associates. It had been a care-free, idle life. Nothing to do all the long sunny day, one day after another, if he chose, save sit on a bale of goods and watch the vessels drop anchor and lower sail for their visit. He knew them all, just as he had a speaking acquaintance with all Kingston, from the wealthy planters down to the half-naked black babies who filled the slave quarters. It was a sort of sociable way he had, and something in his character, which he never stopped to think about, and could not have

understood if he had, that kept him aloof from the vicious or dangerous associates to be met with in such a port. He could sit and discuss trade with a pimento planter as easily as he could play jokes with Lop. It was due to this variegated acquaintance that he learned to talk better than the hangers-on at the docks, and his conversations with friendly well-to-do citizens gave him a general knowledge that helped him to feel on an equal footing with almost any one.

It was over now, and he was going to New England, for seven years, at least. It was all very sudden—the message from Obed Armstrong, ship-owner, that Ginger was a distant relative, and would have a chance in the world if he bound himself out to him as his servant for seven years, the customary length of time.

CHAPTER II

“GOOD-BYE, JAMAICA ”

A WEEK ago, Ginger had been standing at the entrance to a Spanish patio—a square courtyard in the center of the dwelling. This had once belonged to a well-to-do Spaniard, but it had long been used as a tavern for sailors, because of its nearness to the waterfront. He leaned against the immense wooden doorway that led from the noisy saloon to the square once devoted to flowers and a fountain. Now the fountain was dry, save for a puddle of rain-water, and only weeds and climbing plants pried their way between the flags or dangled from the high walls. A seaman was sitting on a bench playing a banjo and tapping time with his feet, while a group of companions listened approvingly, occasionally joining loudly in

the chorus, as the musician struck up familiar chanteys. From the tavern-bar at his back came the fumes of stale rum and the sound of voices in many languages, but he paid no attention to this background. He loved music and was alternately humming and whistling when his elbow was jogged vigorously.

“Look here, Ginger, I’ve got something for you!” The speaker was the mate of a vessel waiting cargo.

“Hello,” greeted the boy. “Back from ’round the Horn? What kind of a trip did you have?”

“Blast my scuppers! The worst storms I ever did see!” declared the mate, delving into one pocket after another. “Wait—here—ah, here it is!” He produced an envelope heavily waxed with a red seal. “This is for you, Ginger.”

“Me! Who from?” exclaimed Ginger, in astonishment, taking the letter and staring at the seal.

"Old man Armstrong, him that owns our brig. I was to get it to you personal, and there it is. Good luck! I'm off to find me some land vegetables to get rid of that salt-beef taste," and he went on his way.

Ginger thought for a moment, then left the grog-shop and set out down the street at a run. He slowed down as he approached a large house set back among palms and pepper trees, and turning in at the gate, ran up to the porch where a banana-planter friend of his was lolling in a hammock reading the latest gazette from England—now several months old.

"Good morning, Ginger. In a hurry?"

"I've a letter from Massachusetts," the boy explained breathlessly, "from Mr. Armstrong, the ship-owner. Will you please read it for me?"

The planter took it and broke the seal.

"So you're doing business with big traders nowadays, are you?"

Ginger, innocent of schooling, stood in

deep absorption while the planter read the letter to him.

“It’s a fine opportunity, Ginger,” he remarked as he concluded. “You don’t want to doze your life away on these wharves, and the only chance you’re likely to get here is going to sea.”

Ginger made up his mind to go, attracted by the adventure of a new life, and realizing the truth of the planter’s words.

Mr. Armstrong had the reputation of being a hard man, even a miser, and it was rather late for him to be thinking of his distant cousinship with Ginger’s mother; however, this bore but little weight with Ginger.

Into the bandana went a purple handkerchief, an extra shirt wrapped around a package of dried fruits—Aunt Mally’s parting gifts—a voodoo amulet, a pair of gold earrings, such as pirates wore—the only valuables he had ever possessed—and a battered spy-glass which he had salvaged from a

wreck. Laden with all his possessions, Ginger was ready to fare forth into the unknown world.

Captain Brade saw the last crate go into the hold and tossed his rope aside.

"When's time to go aboard, Cap?" asked Ginger, stepping forward eagerly to speak to the stern-looking shipmaster.

Captain Brade surveyed the lad with a growl under his breath.

"So you're the redhead that's goin' to Obed Armstrong, hey?"

"Yes."

"'Sir,' to me, or I'll sink you in Davy Jones' locker! All ready, ain't you? I'm speeding up to get out on this wind, but it'll be a few hours yet before we start; you don't look good for anything to me, but the old man'll handle you." And he turned and strode toward the custom-house to fix up his clearance papers.

Ginger paid no attention to the captain's welcome but, assured that he need be in no



“‘SIR,’ TO ME!”— *Page 26.*

hurry, continued to watch the dockside activity with Lop.

“You sure are in a hurry to leave,” said Lop, the minute Captain Brade left. “Here you been settin’ all day with that bundle, as if you wuz goin’ to hop over the ocean in a couple o’ minutes.”

“Well, I like to watch the *Silver Wing* come in. She’s a tidy vessel—wish I owned her.”

“Yah! You won’t never own nothin’ if you work for ole man Armstrong. Don’t you know what they say about him?”

“Let’s go back to Aunt Mally’s—I’ve got time to say good-bye again.”

“Ain’t once enough? You’re hungry, you mean.”

“You’re jealous because you aren’t going, too. You’ll be poking here all your life ——”

“Friend, I pokes where it’s easy, which is more than you’ll do, I’m tellin’ you. You sound like the preacher. What for you

want to get on in the world? Ain't plenty of food all you want?"

"Maybe, just now," Ginger sniffed the air, hungrily, as they walked back along the wharf and into the town.

"Somebody's br'ilin' fish," sensed Lop.

"Hi—here's Dell Pinkham's mule! Get aboard!" Ginger grabbed the flicking tail he caught sight of around a corner, and the small fat burro stopped and looked around in surprise.

"Them that don't tie up their animals deserves to have others ride 'em," Lop declared, letting out a whoop and vaulting on the back of the little animal, where his friend already sat.

"Pull his ears, man! I'll move his tail——" And with much shouting and cajoling and dire threats, the little pack-mule was made to trot slowly down a palm-shaded avenue, his heels kicking up clouds of dust.

Somewhere in the green distance ahead,

hidden in the tropic tangle, was Aunt Mally's domicile. The boys would probably have arrived there sooner on their own legs, for the borrowed steed stopped every few yards and brayed disconsolately, to be set going again only by a profuse application of ear-twisting and tail-pulling. The overhanging palm fronds patterned bars of light and shade on the road, and brilliantly colored birds flashed back and forth above their heads.

“Here we are!” shouted Ginger. “Whoa—stop, I say! He's going past —” they slid off and the burro kept right on, to their great amusement.

“I kin jest see Dell lookin' for that beast,” gurgled Lop.

At first glance from the roadway, only a jungle-like mass of trees and flowers and creeping plants that threw out tendrils over everything, could be seen; then on a little closer inspection, an unpainted fence, broken in places, emerged at intervals from

a mass of cacti, ferns, and climbing roses in full bloom; then, buried under logwoods and rat-catcher trees, the white stone walls of a cottage. The logwoods bore sulphur-yellow blossoms, and their strong sweet odor filled the air. The rat-catcher trees bloomed with rose and lilac clusters of flowers, and the roof of the cottage was completely out of sight under the weight of the bougainvillea. The boys hopped over a bright green lizard, sunning itself in the middle of the plant-choked path, and walked into the house without invitation.

"I knowed you'd be back for a bite to eat," fat Aunt Mally greeted them from the dark interior. The pleasant odor of cooking assailed them. "Who you got along, now?"

"'Lo, Aunt Mally," said Lop, seating himself on a rough bench. "Ain't you glad to see me?"

"Good-for-nothin'," was the old colored woman's only answer to this greeting.

The interior of the tiny house was dark to ensure greater coolness. The room was cluttered with a great many kinds of objects, and a stranger would be liable to fall over earthenware bowls and jars, step into a wicker basket, tangle himself up in the washing, or fall headlong over a basket of breadfruit. Ginger and Lop, accustomed to the litter, had no such mishaps, and chatted about the forthcoming voyage until the meal was ready, when their jaws found other occupation. Twenty minutes later, Ginger bade Aunt Mally good-bye.

“For the last time,” he told her. “You’ll never see me again, probably.”

“Well, honey, don’t you be a bad boy and your Aunt Mally’ll know you is all right.”

“Bye, then; I’ll be going.”

The two boys set off for the dock, where they would idle away the time that remained before sailing. That time came soon enough.

"See you in seven years—maybe!" Ginger said to Lop, as he prepared to go aboard.

"Comin' back?"

"No telling. I'm off to see the world."

The mulatto boy wrinkled his shiny nose.

"I don't envy you none," he called up, but Ginger just waved his hand to him.

Ginger had watched the *Silver Wing* weigh anchor and sail away many a time, and much as he liked all the ships he knew, this trim graceful vessel had caught his affection. Mr. Armstrong might treat his men hardly, but he kept his ships painted and shining until they were a delight to the sailor's eye. Ginger greeted several of the crew, whom he knew, then turned again to keep an eye on Lop. Spread also before him was the panorama of the crowded wharf, the tropic-colored town, with its background of green trees like a tapestry, against which rose the spars and masts and complicated interlacings of countless

ropes and bundles of furled sail, and great hulls gently rocked by the lapping water. The lagoon was calm and blue, a perfect harbor, and outside the reefs, breakers rose and scattered in plumes of feathery spray. A ship with a dolphin figurehead was sailing out, and a British cruiser with its bright Union Jack wide in the breeze was riding slowly in.

“Good-bye, Jamaica,” thought Ginger, sadly, as the hawsers were cast off, and the sails flapped as they caught the breeze, and the roar of a popular chantey rang out. The *Silver Wing* was moving, and an ever widening strip of water stretched between Ginger and the docks where he had spent all his life.

“Good luck, Ginger!” yelled Lop, waving both arms vigorously.

“Good-bye!” Ginger yelled back. The wake of the vessel was making a foamy track which would follow him to his destination.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW BOND-BOY

GINGER had never imagined two harbors more unlike than that of Kingston which he had left, and the one into which the *Silver Wing* was bringing him. Blue seas shimmering with phosphorus and played upon by the bright yellow argonauts of flying-fish, were mysteriously left behind. Gone, too, were the sun-filled skies; great waves swayed in dark billows on the breast of a stormy Atlantic, and the wildly tossed spume blinded Ginger's eyes and almost straightened his hair as he clung to a rope while the vessel pitched up and down. It was fun to watch her prow curve downward through the deep troughs, while mottled gray-green waters surged up on both sides, then roared together again with ceaseless shifting and clots of spray. But the sky

was a lowered curtain of dingy clouds, and where the meager sun looked through, it found nothing brighter to light than the brown masses of floating kelp, or the winter aspect of a rock-bound coast. Ginger was wrapped in a friendly sailor's pea-jacket, but he shivered and chattered from the unaccustomed cold, trying to take in deep lungfuls of the briny air to keep himself warm. It was lonely and trying for him to stay down in the dark forecastle.

"Fine mild weather for March," the cook had assured him that morning. Ginger had been sure it must still be the depths of winter; he had never dreamed that air and wind could be so penetrating. Day after day of cold dismayed him as he looked forward dubiously to the harsh northern climate.

So this was the new harbor! He had been scanning it through his spy-glass ever since it had come into sight, pausing every few minutes to dry the glass on his sleeve,

as the spray dashed high. Salem was much larger than he had imagined it to be, but otherwise, he was disappointed. After the warm colors of Jamaica, the town before him was drab and gloom-wrapped, swept by raw winds, bordered by a beach of dun-colored sand and bare wet rocks. He missed the rank, green vegetation, the blossoming trees covered with parasite orchids and ferns and trailing vines. Those bare trees sprinkled among dingy dwellings looked as though they were chilled to the sap.

The *Silver Wing* dropped anchor at last in opaque water which washed the limpet-covered piles in bottle-green rollers. The dock was crowded with onlookers, but Ginger, after a slow glance, thought them all singularly uninteresting in their dark winter wraps. In a few moments he found himself alone standing in the full sweep of the wind, minus the coat, which he had been obliged to return to its owner, along

with the woolen rags with which he had bound his feet. He wore both his shirts, but they were cotton; he was growing numb, and his teeth chattered. He looked around, trying to fight off the homesickness which assailed him, when a man hurried forward and gripped his arm.

“The bond-boy for Master Armstrong?”

“Yes—sir,” Ginger remembered his manners.

“Come along with me, then. Haven’t you any warmer clothes than what you have on? Barefoot, too! Better hurry out of the wind!” The man set an example by hurrying for a cobbled street as fast as his legs could carry him, and Ginger was only too glad to keep pace.

“I’m John Lang, clerk to Mr. Armstrong.”

Ginger looked at him. His coat collar was turned up around his ears, and a wool muffler obscured the lower part of his face; for the rest, he looked like a rather shabby,

inconspicuous individual, the typical sort of clerk whom Mr. Armstrong would have in his pay.

"Regular Jamaican, aren't you?" went on Mr. Lang, slowing down a little as the street ascended a slight hill. "Thought at first you'd be a negro, but Master told me this morning to bring up a boy with red hair."

Ginger frowned at the implication of his being black just because he came from Jamaica, but said nothing. To forget his cold legs and feet, he looked about him. The scene was novel enough to him. Here were large two-story houses set back of bare lawns, fenced or hedged, with many windows and large red chimneys. They had hurried by some shops which he promised himself he would look at another time, and they passed more of the darkly clad, bundled up people. What a difference, he thought, between their appearance and the lightly clad tropic dwellers! He saw no

slaves, and he told himself that life here in New England did not seem to be the indolent affair it was in the Indies.

“You have to keep moving in this cold,” he thought, his hands so numb that he was afraid of dropping the bandana and perhaps smashing the precious spy-glass.

“How do you like Salem after your West Indies?” John Lang was inquiring.

“I haven’t been here long enough,” replied Ginger, not desiring to say what he thought of this gray, cheerless town.

“That’s right; but first impressions, you know; man has a feeling about a place when he first sees it—least I do. Had my impressions like that——” swinging his mittened fist in the air, “when I clapped my eyes here five years ago; same with Boston; same with Plymouth. But I make up my mind quick.” He gave a sidelong glance at Ginger as though he would add, “about persons.”

Ginger shrewdly guessed that the clerk

was trying to impress him, but the cold was boring into him and he was indifferent. He hoped they did not have far to go. After a while, he began to think of his prospective employer.

"Is Mr. Armstrong—that is, how do you like him for a master?" he asked.

The clerk gave the boy another look and tightened his muffler, seemingly at a loss for words.

"Well," he began, in a guarded tone, "some people say that—er—Mr. Armstrong is—er—a trifle close, or as some others call it, near; but I assure you I believe he is merely cautious—an admirable virtue ——"

"Oh, you don't need to be afraid of your opinion," Ginger interrupted scornfully. "I'll see him soon enough, then I can make up my own mind—first impressions, you know," he added with a grin.

Mr. Lang appeared completely taken aback by Ginger's boldness; his astonish-

ment, indeed, being so great that he almost stopped short in the middle of the hill. Recovering himself, he speeded on, and in complete silence they turned up two more streets. Here were the houses of the more prosperous citizens. Most imposing of all, rose a white mansion, surrounded by spacious grounds. Ginger saw that they were making for it—yes, this must be Obed Armstrong's home! They traversed a long brick walk bordered by empty flower-beds, on either side of which stretched vistas of lawn and stately elm-trees. Mr. Lang gave the knocker three solemn taps and they waited, Ginger almost forgetting his cold in the interest of the situation.

An elderly woman opened the door, raised her eyebrows when she saw Ginger and continued to peer at him with visible surprise while Mr. Lang said:

“Here is the new bond-boy for Master Armstrong, Miss Liddy. It was his instructions I was to bring the boy here from the

Silver Wing, which I have done, I hope to his approval." He bowed and smirked, and Ginger scorned him still more.

"All right, come in," said Miss Liddy. "Good day, Lang," with which rather curt dismissal, she shut the door.

This was the most spacious and magnificent house the boy had ever been in, and walking down the polished floor, he felt, for the first time in his life, out of place.

"I'm the housekeeper," Miss Liddy informed him as they entered a large parlor. "You're to call me Miss Liddy. You stay here, quiet now, till I see if the Master'll come down." And she left him standing in the middle of the room.

He did not stand there long, for a fire crackled pleasantly on the hearth and he hurried to thaw himself out. His feet, he held out in turn close to the flames, but thanks to the steep hill and the length of it, the blood in them was burning, else greater misery than the cold would have afflicted

them. Then, feeling better, he eagerly examined the room. The woodwork was white, the walls the color of old ivory, and with the long windows made a pleasant light. He saw that these windows gave a direct view of the sea, lashing the coast below and stretching into the distant leaden horizon. Every piece of furniture was placed carefully—it was all fine dark walnut—and the entire room had an air of care and precision, characteristics which had entered but little or not at all into Ginger's training. There were bright samplers on the walls, and a rose-and-blue painted screen near the hearth, and various pieces of bric-à-brac on the mantel and in the corners where small tables were placed. He noted with interest a jade Buddha, a piece of coral such as he had often seen in Jamaica, a vase of Oriental workmanship, and a bowl with Dutch figures. On the walls hung a number of portraits, members of the family, he supposed. Aunt Mally's little home had

always been in a state of topsy-turvy carelessness, and the extreme cleanliness and order of this attractive parlor impressed him.

"I think I should like to own a home like this," he told himself, when a door flew open. He turned quickly, eager to see his new master, but confronted instead a pretty girl of about his own age.

CHAPTER IV

JAMAICA "GINGER"

SHE gave a start at sight of him, then closed the door, took a few steps forward, and stood looking at him with undisguised interest. She was dressed in the daintiest white cambric frock with a skirt covered with flounces which stood out softly; she wore also a lace-edged apron, evidently more ornamental than useful, and pretty lilac-colored kid slippers. Her face was framed in dark curls tied with a silk ribbon to match the shoes.

Ginger had never had any reason to criticise his appearance, but under the appraising look the girl's intelligent dark eyes gave him, he felt acutely conscious of every hole and patch in his inadequate costume. His hands and feet expanded in his imagination, and in this atmosphere of restrained and

quiet colors, his bundle struck him as being crude and outlandish.

"Who in the world are you?" she asked, finally, moving a little nearer.

"I'm Ginger—from Jamaica," he managed to say, though his voice sounded far away.

"Jamaica Ginger—how funny!" she laughed. "You're the bond-boy, then. You see, I'm just back from Boston and I didn't know who you could be. Isn't it very wonderful to make such a long trip? Were you seasick?"

Her questions had an eager friendly note, and he began to forget how queer he must look to her.

"There is something new every minute aboard ship," he replied readily, "and I wasn't sick at all. I've been on the water around Kingston too much, although the sea is much rougher up here."

"I have some beautiful prints of Jamaica that Father gave me, but I dare say that you

can tell me all about it—la, how interesting to travel! I've never been farther than Boston."

"It isn't all fun by any means. I never want to see hardtack again."

"I used to be very much dissatisfied because I wasn't a boy who could go to sea. Of course, I'm grown up now and know better."

Ginger smiled for answer. Although she had the assured air of a young lady, he suspected that she would make quite a jolly companion for a girl, but he reflected that he was a servant, and she must look down upon him as such.

"Didn't you know that it would be cold up here?" she was inquiring. "You must be nearly frozen—your nose is still blue."

Ginger was glad that she did not know how miserable he felt at his appearance, but he answered:

"These are all the clothes I have."

"Oh!" She was evidently surprised, but

quickly changed the subject. "That is a very pretty handkerchief you have. Is that—is that all the baggage you brought?"

Ginger laughed at this. "You must be used to rich people," he said. "I am only a bond-boy, you know, and I've always been poor. Why should I have anything?"

"Well, I didn't mean to be inquisitive. I've spent four years in a seminary and I assure you, I am quite bored with life. I think you are very interesting."

Ginger wasn't quite sure what "bored" meant. He could bore a hole in a plank, but she was not referring to carpenter-work. Deciding quickly not to let a little word stop him, he said:

"Don't you say that because it's considered fashionable?"

"La, what do *you* know about fashion?"

"I keep my ears open."

"Then for your edification I shall inform you that I am not posing. A life of adventure has always appealed to me, but

girls are supposed to sit at home and embroider. These are my samplers around here, and I hand-painted that screen." She waved her hand scornfully at these accomplishments.

Ginger, however, thought them very pretty, and said so.

"It is nice of you to praise my work," the young lady responded graciously. "I must believe that you have good taste, just for the sake of my vanity. I shall tell Father ——"

What she would tell remained unknown, for Obed Armstrong entered the room at this moment. The girl curtsied and left him, casting an encouraging smile at Ginger as she hurried out.

Mr. Armstrong was an old man, somewhat lame from the gout, which caused him to lean heavily on his stick; but his physical disabilities had not affected the active participation in his business for which he was so well known; and keen-minded as ever,

he sat in his offices near the docks, where he could look out upon the masts of his vessels when in harbor, and there he ruled like a despot.

The master of ships was dressed in rusty black, although neatly; his heavy gray hair was carefully combed, bushy gray eyebrows were knitted in a belligerent frown, and the grim lines in which his jaw was set, together with the hawk-like nose and open nostrils, gave an impression of a stern character which would never be swayed by sentiment.

"This man sure does business for all the profit he can get. Over-feeding his sailors will never keep him awake nights, so long as it means more money," was Ginger's thought.

The old man stood now and appraised Ginger, who returned his gaze with his own steady look, unconscious of the fact that men were reputed to lower their eyes before old Obed Armstrong's regard.

"Bond-boy, eh?" greeted Mr. Armstrong, in a clear decisive voice.

He moved toward an armchair, and seeing that he limped, even with the aid of the cane, Ginger hurried to his side and taking his arm, eased him into the chair. The action was instinctive, the sort of good-natured help he always gave. But it had quite an effect on his future, could he have known it, for no act, however trifling, ever escaped the notice and memory of Obed Armstrong.

Mr. Armstrong did not even thank the boy.

"Stand there in the light," he directed, "and let me have a look at you. Yes, you are my cousin's boy; all but the red hair—your father's, I believe. I am not aware of your name, lad."

"Ginger, sir," was the prompt reply.

"Ginger! That's not a name! Don't tell me your mother christened you anything like that."

"Arnold, sir—but my mother called me Ginger, and so does every one else."

"Well, it sounds better in my ears than your father's name; your father was no friend of mine, as perhaps you know."

Ginger shook his head. Mr. Armstrong's thoughts, for a moment, dwelt on events that had occurred before Ginger was born.

"Past and gone now, with many other things of youth. If you have wondered why I never before took notice of our relationship, that is the reason. However, your mother was a favorite cousin of mine, and I have long since ceased to think of her foolish marriage. I need an all-round boy, some one to help in the garden, the kitchen, the stable, or anywhere as occasion arises. I expect you to work hard. I know the enervating climate of Jamaica, and the sort of life you've probably led there. That's behind you now. I allow no shirking and hear no excuses for work ill done. Go through that door," indicating with his

cane, "and find the kitchen. Miss Liddy will give you something to eat and show you where you are to sleep. By the way," as Ginger started to obey the abrupt dismissal, "you are to regard my daughter as your mistress. That is all."

"Yes, sir." And Ginger left the room.

He found himself in a panelled hall, along which were a number of doors; he hesitated as to which belonged to the kitchen, and was attracted by a ship's model hung against the wall—a carved schooner with sails and rigging complete. A door opened at the very end of the passage, and Miss Liddy looked out.

"Come in here," she called, disappearing again.

Ginger hurried in, took the chair she motioned him to, by the stove, and sat there, still holding his scarlet bundle.

"How you ever came to have so few clothes!" The housekeeper wondered, bustling about and preparing a welcome

meal—he was glad of that, for he was terribly hungry.

"We don't need clothes in the Indies," he informed her.

"My stars! I do believe the heat must be dreadful! I like cold weather myself, but I dare say you won't for a while. When Master first told me about the Jamaican who was coming, I thought you'd be as black as ebony! I know there's white folks there, but somehow I imagined you'd be a native."

"Yes, that's what Mr. Lang thought."

"Humph! That clerk knows next to nothing, or maybe less. Here's your lunch—you can have all you want to eat. Master squeezes money but so long as Persis says the servants are to be well treated, we are."

"Persis?"

"Mr. Armstrong's daughter. She's just come back from her school in Boston, quite a young lady. Every one loves her—she's been motherless since a baby, and we've all

just kind of adopted her. I've been here since before she was born, myself. Mr. Armstrong is a hard man, I will admit, but when it comes to Persis, his heart is like so much putty."

Ginger heard this with interest, in the meantime eating what was set before him with the hearty hunger of a poorly satisfied sea-appetite. The kitchen in which he sat was to him a miracle of order and cleanliness. Utensils and cutlery such as he had never seen or heard of, hung on the walls or reposed on shelves.

"This is a real home," he thought. "I'd like to live in a place like this all the time." And with this worthy hope he kept on eating and observing.

"Here comes Caleb with your shoes!" announced Miss Liddy suddenly, as she passed one of the white-curtained windows.

Ginger was about to ask for an explanation, but the man entered before he had time.

"Caleb tends the stable and gardens," the housekeeper said by way of introduction. "Have a sip o' tea, Caleb?" and she set out an extra cup.

"Thanks, Miss Liddy. This the new boy? Red head, ain't ye? I'll wager ye're good and determined. Here's somethin' fer ye." And he dropped a large pair of shoes.

Ginger had never worn shoes, and he looked at them curiously. In any other weather he would have refused them, but he knew that he could not go about bare-foot in winter, and tried to resign himself.

"Does every one wear shoes as heavy and clumsy as these?" he inquired in surprise, surveying his feet after he had put them on.

"Ye'll get used to them," said Caleb, "and if *they're* heavy, ye'd ought to try on my big boots; they weighs a good many pounds."

Ginger essayed to walk, and felt as though he were dragging weights that impeded every step.

"I suppose I shall get used to them," he remarked, feeling as awkward as a baby calf trying to stand. "There are going to be plenty of other things to get used to," he added to himself.

"When ye're through eatin'," Caleb told him, "ye are to come with me to get a whole outfit o' duds; Missy runs and tells me ye look like a melancholic icicle, and I'm to be sure ye has plenty o' mufflers. Ole Master he orders strong stuff as'll last, then ye'll be all fixed up for the weather. This tea be good, Miss Liddy."

Ginger gave one fleeting thought to Lop, as he had last seen him sitting on the Kingston wharf in the warm sun, far away from all this cold and hard work. Then, resolutely putting aside the memory of that easy life, he set his teeth and waited for Caleb to drink his tea.

A few hours later, Ginger looked quite a different person. He, too, now wore the heavy dark clothing suitable to this climate,

with a greatcoat, muffler, mittens, thick stockings, and a warm shirt in place of his white cotton ones. He thought himself unbearably bundled up, although it was a relief not to shiver and be miserable in the cold, but as he had always worn only the fewest possible garments, he felt it would take him some time to grow accustomed to all these wraps.

His first task in New England was that of chopping wood. He was given an ax by Caleb and told to "chop that pile like this, see?" showing him a sample. Ginger looked at the stack, squared his shoulders and started in. At the end of hours and hours and hours—or so he thought—Miss Liddy came to the back door of the kitchen and called:

"Supper time!"

Ginger was strong and sturdy, yet the unaccustomed work made him more tired than he had ever been before.

"This isn't going to be like Jamaica," he

told himself as he dropped the ax. "Still, I don't care even if it is hard work—probably I'll get to do something better in a little while. That's what Mr. Armstrong said in his letter, that I could advance."

And realizing now what it meant to be a bond-boy, Ginger went into the house for supper.

CHAPTER V

GINGER LEARNS HIS LETTERS

GINGER gave the last polish to the last lamp and set it with its fellows on the kitchen shelf. He blew out one of the two candles that had lighted his task, as Miss Liddy had directed.

“We have to save lights,” she told him. “Don’t you keep more than one going, except while you have to.”

It was long after supper, and Miss Liddy was somewhere up-stairs braiding mats until bedtime. Ginger had the kitchen to himself, and now that his last chore for the day was over, he leaned his head on his arms and watched the candle shadows flicker up and down the dim walls. The house was very quiet, and little creaks and whispers of sound were magnified.

Ginger thought of the three months that

had passed, the months that would come. Longingly, he recalled Jamaica, and it was like a golden dream in memory.

“I wonder why I ever left?” he asked himself in discouragement. “If I’d stayed in Kingston I might have gone to sea—it’s a hard life, but I might have become captain of my own ship some day. Here, I’ll just be the boy who does chores—for seven years I’ll be just where I started, and all that time wasted. I want to get to do something better than this.”

He had passed his first spring in New England. The early warmth of summer now filled the air. The lawns were dotted with fluffy dandelions, and the apple-trees had lost their pink and white bloom. The pastel hues of spring had been lovely—Salem was all delicate yellows, greens, pinks, and blues; the sea was a clearer color, and the austere gray of winter had completely passed. The Armstrong mansion looked more imposing than ever, sur-

rounded by spacious lawns and fine shade-trees. Ginger welcomed the advent of summer, after the hard cold to which he was so unused.

Mr. Armstrong had provided the new bond-boy with plenty of warm clothing, but in spite of mufflers and boots, he had suffered all winter from chapped, bleeding hands and chilblains. The gray days and the chill rains depressed him with their gloom, and breaking the ice in a pan of water and watching the glitter of frost melt as morning advanced, he would recall the warm sunrises of Jamaica. He often thought of the letter that had brought him here. Mr. Armstrong had promised "a chance in the world"—those were the very words—to Ginger, if the boy bound himself out in his service.

"Rubbing down horses and weeding dandelions out of the front lawn isn't exactly what I'd call a big chance," Ginger thought. "I might have known that old man didn't

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mean what he said; he drives his men like slaves and squeezes every penny he gets, so why should he bother to think of a mere promise? If I'm to get on, it's to be by myself. Anyhow, thinking about it will never get me ahead."

Dismissing his reverie, Ginger reached for a little bundle, wrapped in the faithful bandana. It disclosed two or three ragged leaves torn from a primer, a quill-pen—Ginger took care of a flock of geese—and a horn of watery ink which he had found in the attic along with the primer pages, the day he was sent to get a cobweb for Caleb's cut finger. Spreading out a piece of brown wrapping-paper, his brows knitted in anxious concentration as he proceeded patiently to copy the script letters. The candle sputtered in a draft and he moved it.

"Wonder what Lop is doing now?" he mused, regarding an O which was more oblong than round. "He was right—I wish I'd listened to him. There are too many

callouses on my hand for me to make these letters."

But he kept on, encouraged by a graceful *S* that happened to flow from the end of the quill.

"*T, U, V* ——" he read aloud. "I've got to weed the kitchen-garden to-morrow. . . . *W*—if Mr. Armstrong wasn't so stingy, I'd get it done in half a day, but those tools are too old and dull—*X, Y*. I'll never learn to make a *Y*." He poised the quill above the ink-horn, but his thoughts wandered.

After all, it wasn't work that he minded—none of his tasks was particularly hard, although he was kept running from dawn until nightfall and often later; it was the unvarying round, the monotony, and the certainty that he was learning nothing.

"How long have I been copying these letters?" Ginger demanded of the kitchen in general. "I'd give anything for a chance at learning."

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He thought of the children whom he saw going down the hill mornings—some of the boys lagged and played by the way, and showed every evidence of disliking the imposed tasks of the strict old lady who kept an academy at the foot of the hill.

Ginger envied them heartily; his own lack of education had been a matter of no moment in his life until he came to Salem, and here he was ashamed of it. Things were different here.

He loved to watch the sun rise above the sea and touch with gold the ships lying in the harbor; he would have gone down and observed the vessels close at hand, only he never had time; but he could watch them from the garden or stable, where he worked much of the time, and could dream fancifully of owning some one of them that attracted him—the *Silver Wing*, perhaps. She had always been a favorite of his, back in Kingston. Then he would reflect that he could never become a ship-owner if he

could not read and write and do sums. He tried making another Y, but it was crooked, and he regarded his labors with a feeling of utter discouragement.

"I'm not getting on," he said, half aloud, and then jumped at the sound of light footsteps almost at his elbow.

"Oh, did I startle you? You were so absorbed you didn't hear me come in."

Persis smiled pleasantly, but Ginger blushed with embarrassment, and tried to cover his clumsy work with his arms. The ink-horn, however, could not be included in this attempt at concealment, and Persis pulled a stool to the table and sat down as though she meant to stay there for some time.

"Tell me what you're doing," she asked, crossing her feet comfortably and resting her elbows on the table.

Persis's return from Boston had been the beginning of a series of parties and visits, apparently unending; she had been away

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three weeks in the country, and another four weeks in Boston to buy her summer clothes, and off on one excursion after another. Naturally, with all these things to keep her from home, Ginger had seen but very little of her, although she would sometimes stand and talk with him about Jamaica while he was saddling her horse or getting the carriage out for her. This meant a great deal to Ginger.

The grown-up airs which she frequently assumed rather disconcerted him, however, and she always looked so exquisitely neat and dainty that he felt his shabby clothes and awkwardness the more keenly.

“You should never rouse a woman’s curiosity,” she said, shoving his elbow aside and turning the wrapping-paper and primer so that she could see what they were. “Dear me! Are you learning your letters? Don’t you know ——”

“No,” replied Ginger shortly, “I don’t know anything.”

Persis raised her brows and regarded his frown with amusement.

"You're over-sensitive, aren't you?"

"Am I? What do you mean?"

"You shouldn't be ashamed of anything you don't know, unless you have refused a chance to learn. Every one doesn't have the same opportunities."

"Well, I have been ashamed. Here I am at my age and can't write my own name!"

Persis was examining the primer.

"You have only four pages here. Wait a minute and I'll bring a better one——"

She always moved quickly, and before Ginger could guess her intention, she had run out of the kitchen. He occupied the time in which she was gone in mending his pen and wondering whether to be glad or sorry that she had discovered him in his hitherto secret pursuit.

"She's probably right about being ashamed," he acknowledged, reluctant to be

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corrected by a girl. "I just ought to try to learn!"

"Now we can do something!" said Persis in a bright, eager voice, and with a triumphant smile, she dropped a pile of books, slates, sponges, and chalk on the table.

"I've never thrown away any of my school-books," she explained, settling herself once more on the stool. "You might as well have them, since they're of no use to me now. I'm glad they're in good condition," flipping the leaves of a reader. "And yet, goodness knows I did hate my tutor for putting me at columns of figures every time I got a blot or a stain on any of them."

Ginger looked eagerly at an arithmetic, and thought that he could learn it by himself without any trouble just as soon as he could read the explanations and problems.

"How can I thank you ——" he began awkwardly, not knowing what to say.

"Dear me! Don't be grateful! You know I told you the first time we met that I was bored with life. Do you remember?"

"Yes, of course."

"I suppose it did sound funny! And you a perfect stranger in a new country—I thought about the welcome I gave you afterward. I must have made you feel like a curiosity on exhibition."

Ginger laughed as he quickly answered, "No, you didn't. And I was a queer-looking fellow, anyhow."

"You know, it was such a good joke! That first day I saw you I had been planning a new pelisse, and I was wondering whether to line it with russet or green quilting; and when I opened the parlor door, not thinking at all of any one being in there, my eyes rested on your bright red head, and I thought, 'a russet lining, of course'—and then it seemed so funny, and I had no idea who you could be."

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They both laughed at this, and Ginger inquired:

“What is a pelisse? It sounds like a pelican, but I know it isn’t a bird ——”

Persis giggled at this dense ignorance, and finally controlling herself enough to explain, said:

“It’s a sort of coat. Haven’t you seen the nice blue one I brought from Boston with the covered buttons all down the front? But I forgot—boys never do notice such things, and it isn’t ladylike to laugh so heartily.”

“You learn just how to be proper and mannerly at school, don’t you?”

“At the seminary in Boston, that’s just about all we do learn. My, how we were watched! I remember that Abigail See had to stand in the corner an hour and a half for drinking her tea too fast; and I helped Jessie, the friend I was riding with yesterday, do a monstrous list of French conjugations when she forgot to turn her toes out. You

should be thankful, sir, that you sit here so easy. We used to do our lessons with knitting needles under our chins."

"What for?" gasped Ginger.

"So we wouldn't stoop; if we bent our heads, the needles jabbed us in the chin."

"I'd run away," declared Ginger, unconsciously feeling his chin.

"No, you wouldn't. We had lots of fun to make up for it."

"Miss Liddy said the other day that you go to twenty parties a week here, and then she started to tell us all about them while we were eating—I mean Caleb and I. My head was swimming with cotillions and ices when I got outside again."

"Dear soul! She's so interested in everything I do! I always tell her everything that's happened when I get back from a visit. It's been a lovely winter for me, with all the entertainments I've been to; every one is so nice, it seems! But now our social life is slackening with summer coming, and

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"I shall find lots of dull time on my hands." She paused a moment before going on. "Would you like me to help you learn? It's rather hard to start by yourself and I have nothing at all to do evenings."

"No, how could I? You have too many other things ——"

"After I just told you I had nothing else to do!"

"I'm such a slow pupil ——"

"You've never had a teacher, so how do you know?"

"I'd hate the task, myself."

"No reason at all why *I* should; we're different persons."

Ginger felt that his arguments were exhausted. While he was trying to think up others, at the same time inwardly excited over the prospect of really learning, Persis spread out a book, two slates, and the accompanying chalk and sponges.

"You make quite good letters," she said, looking at the alphabetical rows. "You're

ready to begin on words—now let's not waste time." And thus Ginger found himself on the path that would lead to opportunity and fortune. Persis was a lively, yet patient teacher, and the encouraged feeling with which her scholar went to bed that night would have been a great joy to her if she had guessed it—as perhaps she did.

Ginger's room was over the stable, where a feather bed on the floor, woolen blankets, and one candle comprised the furniture. When he left the kitchen that night, he carried the new books and slates which he intended to hoard carefully under the tick.

"All I need is a start," he told himself, as he crossed the dark stretch of vegetable garden, skirted the poultry-yard and walked under the dense shade of the maples in front of the barn. Thinking of his lesson, he slackened his steps, which made no sound as he stepped on the soft dirt of the carriage drive. Low voices coming from the other side of the maples halted him.



LOW VOICES COMING FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MAPLES
HALTED HIM.—*Page 74.*

CHAPTER VI

A MYSTERIOUS CONVERSATION

“WHAT’S up?” muttered Ginger, straining his ears.

“I tell you it’ll have to stop one o’ these days; this business can’t keep goin’ on the way it does.”

“Not while the old man counts his gold.”

“Gold! Gold! It do give me the shivers to hear the groans o’ them poor black ——”

“Sshhh! You’ll be hearin’ your own groans if ye don’t watch out. That cargo’s got to go through!”

“Ain’t we the men to do it? Nobody ever said we was slack.”

“No, and we’ve got to be on the jump when we work for old Armstrong.”

“I’m willin’ to do my share, but I tell ye, I didn’t know what I was bein’ let in

for. This work don't set on my conscience right."

"Huh! Old man don't seem to lose no sleep over it."

"Him? No—but he ain't in the middle o' things the way we are; we're the ones that sees what it's really like; and he jest sets and takes the money."

The voices blurred as the men moved away, and Ginger caught only one odd word, "shackled."

He ran on tiptoe to the trees and peered cautiously around; he thought he could distinguish the figures of two men disappearing in the shrubbery that lay beyond, but the moon had not risen, and it was too dark for him to guess at their appearance. Should he follow? He hesitated, then decided not to.

"It's no business of mine, so long as they don't seem to be thieves. They must be sailors. What are they doing here at this hour of the night? Persis and I sat up

late ——” Ginger glanced back at the dark bulk of the house. There was a light burning up-stairs in a window which he was sure belonged to Mr. Armstrong’s room.

“They came to see him and left by the back-door. Now why? And they talked about his gold.”

Ginger slowly mounted the ladder to his loft, turning the words he had heard over in his mind.

“Whose groans could that man mean? They say Mr. Armstrong’s captains are all very hard men, and I saw the way Captain Brade treated the sailors. This man might have meant some comrade of his in irons ——”

Ginger considered this a likely explanation, and again, an unlikely one. The treatment of seamen was nowhere much better than that given on Obed Armstrong’s vessels, and for a sailor to feel any particular sympathy was extraordinary. The puzzle impressed him, and most of all that one last

word, "shackled." It had a sinister sound, and he wondered if it had any connection with Persis's father. "What cargo is it that the man said must go out? It looks as if Mr. Armstrong is mixed up in some crooked scheme or other; I wonder if he's trying to cheat somebody in his trade? It sounds suspicious and mysterious, but still, maybe if I knew what it was they were talking about, it would be simple. Those men were probably just exchanging sea gossip, and maybe it's not so extraordinary for them to leave the house by the back-door, since it's so late. I won't jump at conclusions. But it sounds queer."

Ginger had his bed in a corner where the roof slanted down to the floor, and lying there, he looked out through a small square of window from which he could see the stars above the rounded tops of the trees in early leaf. He had often thought them lonely, and burrowing under the covers in the cold, he would long for the pleasant

ease and warmth of Jamaica. To-night, instead of the past, he saw the future.

“I’ll soon be able to read!” he murmured as he fell asleep, forgetting the broken bit of conversation he had overheard.

The very next day, Ginger was reminded of what he had heard back of the house, and a little more light was shed on what the two sailors were talking about. It was not often that Ginger got away from the house and garden, for he was needed there nearly all the time, and at first he suspected Miss Liddy had thought it best to keep him “right to hum,” as Caleb said. She knew that Ginger was an orphan, and she had been secretly fearing to find a sulky, difficult, and wayward boy on her hands. But it was not long before his dependable and steady ways relieved her, and she began to send him on all kinds of errands which she had formerly done herself.

“Caleb never brings the right things, no

matter how I warn him over and over again," she would say.

This morning, Ginger went down into Salem to order corn-meal and oats and feed for the chickens at the dark barn-like store where everything seemed to be sifted over with various grains, and where there was a powdery, mealy dust in the air. Having given his order, Ginger did not hurry back, for it happened that he had nothing to do at the time—it was mid-afternoon and Miss Liddy was taking a "cat-nap," as she called it.

"I'll just take a look at the docks," he thought, irresistibly drawn to the ships at anchor. He had few spare moments for lingering by the sea as he loved to do, and he looked about him eagerly. A case of spices from the far East had been broken in unloading, and the whole air was filled with the pungent odor. How vividly that smell recalled Jamaica! He could almost see the trees, loaded down with blossoms,

breathing that fragrance all around. Ginger had not wandered about long before he fell in with some illuminating conversation. He had leaned up against a great pile of cordage, not feeling that he had time to sit up on top of the coiled hemp, as he would have liked to do, for the air was soft and balmy, and the water, even here close to the docks, rippled in blue waves. Two boys about his own age were standing a few feet away, watching the unloading of the spice cargo, just as he was. Ginger had not noticed them particularly, for he was eagerly scanning the activity down at the end of the wharf. Then he saw that they had strolled toward him, and the foremost boy nodded and asked:

“Do you know the *Silver Wing* when you see her? We’ve been talking of her, and Joel here says she’s not in yet.”

“No, she’s not,” promptly returned Ginger. “I know the *Silver Wing* as well as I do my own face.”

"I thought maybe it was that ship out there," said the other boy named Joel, a big lumbering fellow with a good-humored but dull-looking face. "That there ——" he pointed out at a vessel whose name was hidden by another ship moored alongside her. "We can't see the hull from here, and I thought mebbe that was the *Silver Wing*."

Ginger shook his head emphatically. He began to point out to them the difference between the clipper they were looking at and the vessel which had brought him to Salem and which he knew so well.

"I think that's the *Belinda B. Tuttle*," he said, "that sails around the Horn. I'm not sure, but it looks like her. She's a tub compared to the *Silver Wing*."

The two boys were much impressed by his nautical knowledge, and they began to chat.

"Zed says the *Silver Wing* is the best ship old Armstrong owns," volunteered Joel, nodding his head at his friend, a thin

wiry boy with many freckles and a good suit of clothes which proclaimed him to be quite well off.

“She is,” agreed Ginger warmly.

“Armstrong don’t run his blacks on her, that’s why,” remarked Zed.

“Run what?” echoed Ginger.

“He don’t pack her full o’ slaves the way some o’ these men do. There’s a fellow right here in Salem runs black cargo from Africa to the Indies, to Jamaica, and his boat is a mess. They’ve got the toughest-looking crew you ever saw.”

Ginger suddenly remembered the conversation he had overheard the night before. He recalled the words rapidly in his mind—could they apply to slave-running?

“I never heard of any of that business being done by a Salem owner,” he said, “when I was in Jamaica. That’s where I came from, and I used to know pretty near everything that went on.”

“There is a slave-dealer here, though,”

declared Zed. "I daren't tell his name; but my father knows about it. He buys the blacks from the Mohammedans over on the African coast, and he dumps 'em down around Port Royal."

"Oh, well, I'm from Kingston." Ginger knew quite a bit about the trade. It was a wretched business for any ship-owner to engage in, he thought, although he himself had been brought up in a country where slave labor was a matter of course.

"I bet he don't run them into the States, though," spoke up Joel, who appeared to be a slow thinker.

"Yes, he does, too," retorted Zed. "It's against the law, but he sneaks his cargo where they want the laborers."

Ginger thought again of the sailors, the word "shackled," and the phrase, "the groans o' them poor black——" had he meant black slaves?

"Does Mr. Armstrong go in for any of that?" he inquired offhand. Zed spoke as

though he knew what he was talking about. Noticing that he was wearing a fine gold watch-chain, Ginger concluded that his father must be a well-to-do man.

“That old fellow? Not that I know of. He’s too foxy. He does too much rich trade in tea and sugar and stuff, anyhow.”

“Sure, and he’s the grouchiest old codger I ever laid eyes on,” added Joel.

Ginger grinned as he wondered what his master would say if he could hear these remarks.

“He’s a miser,” continued Zed. “He squeezes everybody. My father trades in coffee and silk and he knows him pretty well. He—hi, there! What are you doing down here?” This last exclamation was meant for a youth who was approaching them down the dock, and Ginger turned and looked to see who it was. He kept on looking while a little smile curled the corners of his mouth, for a more perfect dandy he had never seen. From the frilled cuffs

of his fine linen shirt to the polished tips of his boots, and to the lavender silk handkerchief which he carried, the advancing youth was an exquisite picture. He was probably a year or so older than Ginger, and removing his hat, his black hair shone slick and smooth with bear's grease. Ginger had an overwhelming longing to meet this gentleman somewhere near a nice mud-puddle and then, by accident, trip him up.

"Hello," greeted this youth, bowing to Zed and nodding slightly at Joel. "I just came down to look at the ships. How about you?"

"We're talking about slave-running," grinned Zed, winking at Ginger. "Know anything about it, Bart?"

"No slaver ever puts into Salem!" declared the dandy, looking disgusted. "You're always talking about ugly things, Zed. Come on up to my house this afternoon—my sister's baked a cake, and she's going to cut it for tea."

“Hurray! Do we have to wait till then?” cried Zed.

“Any chance of inviting me?” asked the slow-spoken Joel.

The newcomer, whom Zed had called Bart, pulled a thread off his coat.

“You can come if you want to,” he replied, after a slight pause. He glanced at Ginger and took in his plain woolens. “This a friend of yours?”

Ginger felt his red hair prick. If this had been said on the wharves of Kingston, he would have plunged into a fight and taken some of the starch out of Bart’s ruffled shirt. However, he had left that sort of life behind him, and he merely stood and frowned in a determined way he had when he was angry—which indeed was very rarely.

“He’s from Jamaica,” said Zed. “I don’t know your name, young fellow?”

“Ginger,” was the short reply.

“Is that all?” demanded Zed.

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It was all the name Ginger was ever used to giving, but he recollected that he must acquire more formal manners now, and he said:

"Ginger Wade. I'm bond-boy to Mr. Armstrong."

"Bond-boy!" the elegant Bart echoed. "Well, of course I can't ask you to tea." He turned away, and Ginger spoke.

"No, and I wouldn't have accepted, anyhow." The meaning of his words was clear, and for a moment he and Bart looked at each other belligerently. Then Bart said loftily:

"I'm going on. Want to come along, Zed?"

"Yes, I'll go along with you." Zed gave Ginger a good-natured grin and sauntered along with his friend.

"I'd like to bash that fop's nose in," declared Ginger.

"He thinks he owns the earth," agreed Joel, good-naturedly. "He looks down on

me, too, because my father isn't as rich as his father."

This trifling encounter irritated Ginger more than he cared to admit. But it had one good effect; it made him more determined than ever to study hard.

"I'm not going to stay down where a fellow like that can tilt his nose at me," he told himself energetically. "He thinks I'm nobody because I'm a bond-boy, does he? Well, he can just wait and see."

After a while, he was cool enough to think of the talk about the secret trade from Africa. He wondered if his master were really engaged in that occupation?

"I never heard a hint of it at Kingston, but some of his island cargoes unloaded at the other ports on the island. It isn't any of my business, but I'll keep an eye out to windward."

Ginger was one of those people who can never be satisfied to accept a mystery—he always wanted to know.

CHAPTER VII

GINGER HEARS SOME GOLDEN SENTIMENTS

THAT first lesson in the kitchen was followed by many more. About an hour after supper, Ginger would settle himself at the table and wait for the teacher, who soon arrived and drew up her stool with a businesslike air which seemed to say:

“No waste of time, now.”

For about an hour they would work away in perfect concentration, Persis apparently taking as great interest in their progress through the First Reader as Ginger himself. Then the lesson would begin to slacken, while conversation intermingled with the sentences Ginger chanted aloud and copied on his slate. The great topic at first was Ginger's former life in Jamaica. Persis had an inexhaustible stock of questions to ask, and Ginger was glad to talk about his

country. A discussion of Kingston naturally included Ginger's friendship with Lop and some of their escapades together. Persis laughed at his story of Dell's donkey.

"Every time that beast of his would run away," said Ginger, "Dell would come tearing down to Aunt Mally's to see if we were there, or he'd run around to the places where he thought it likely to find us; somehow, we always managed to find the burro before he did, and he could be sure if it were missing that Lop and I had it or could tell where we'd last been riding it; he would be so mad he would actually hop up and down."

"I'd like to have seen him."

"More than once I've stood on that little mule's back to steal oranges from over a wall. One thing, when he stood still, he generally stayed that way for a long time. And when I think of all the fruit we ate between the three of us! We used to feed him better than his own master did."

Persis laughed, then sat in unusual silence, as though some serious thought occupied her.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Ginger, sponging off his slate.

"I was picturing you stealing the fruit."

"I'd like a banana right now." But Ginger saw that she was serious about something and wondered what it could be. He did not remain long in ignorance.

"I don't think you were well brought up, Ginger. Have you ever gone to church?"

Ginger shook his head. "Never been inside one since my mother died. She used to take me. I liked to go then—when I was a little fellow. But Aunt Mally was too fat and lazy to bother, and so I just naturally dropped the habit. Even Lop used to go at times to a mission. Is it my stealing that bothers you?"

"Yes. Don't think I'm afraid you'll turn out a thief ——" Persis smiled at the idea.

"I used to take plums from Mr. Gardiner's

tree lots of times, when I was little. But I was thinking that you couldn't have received any moral instruction, being brought up as you were. I had to read the Bible every day as soon as I could spell out my letters, and I've never missed church except two or three times when I was ill, or it was too stormy to go out."

"I wasn't brought up at all by Aunt Mally. Church is fine for girls, I guess, but I don't think I'd be any better if I went."

"Oh, yes you would," contradicted Persis, gravely. "It makes a difference in your thoughts—I can't quite explain what I feel, but the minister told us last week that we live as we believe, and he said that if our minds and thoughts aren't on a high plane, of course our actions won't be, and we shall never amount to a great deal."

"Wicked people often become rich and famous and have all they want," objected Ginger. "There was a planter in Kingston

who had lots of money and big trade, but he treated his slaves worse than anybody else on the Island, they used to say; and when he'd ride through the town, if a negro or a poor person got in his way or made him drive slower, he'd crack at him with his whip as if he were a dog."

"There are lots of things better than money; that man you speak of wouldn't have the respect of those who knew him—he couldn't have, and I can guess that he didn't have many friends."

"No—you're right; what friends he did have were either like himself or men who wanted something from him."

"Are you ambitious?"

"I don't want to be a servant all my life. I want to be my own master."

"You will if you keep on. Not everybody would sit up nights studying——"

"Oh, that isn't much to do."

"I've seen a light in the stable after I've left you and gone to my room, even after

I've said my prayers, and I know it doesn't take you so long to get to bed as it does me, because I have to put my hair in curl-papers, and I read a chapter in some good book every night—sermons or some other instructive work."

"*You* ought to be very good," declared Ginger. "I suppose you mean that if I want to be ambitious in the right way, I should go to church, and think of something besides—what do you call it—worldly things?"

Persis nodded. "You admit that you liked to go to church when your mother took you?"

"That was an awful long time ago." Ginger remembered it in a distant way. His mother used to dress him in a white suit, put a stiff little hat on his head, and opening a frilly parasol, would take him by the hand as they walked through the hot Sunday-morning quiet. Church was a very decorous affair, and little Ginger had al-

ways been awed by the deep-voiced man who climbed into the pulpit and stood back of a huge Bible, a fine wig making him look doubly solemn. He remembered, even though it was so long ago, how the palm trees scraped against the window above the pew; and another memory was very clear and distinct—his mother, on Sunday evenings, singing hymns to him in a voice which he considered the softest and most beautiful in the world.

Persis watched Ginger's face, as for a few moments he forgot her presence, and thought of those early years. Her sharp eyes did not miss the change in his expression, and after gazing intently, she said:

"I know why you will not go to church now, although it's a very foolish reason."

"Why?" asked Ginger in surprise. "Because I'm afraid the sermon will be something I couldn't understand?"

"No, you've got a mistaken pride, somehow. You hate being dependent, being a

bond-boy, and if you can't go to church in a fine carriage with two horses you don't want to go at all."

"Oh, not so bad as that, I hope!" Ginger threw back his head and laughed. "Whatever makes you think that? I bound myself out of my own free will; I'm perfectly contented to work my seven years."

He did not want her to think he was dissatisfied with his position in her home—and he remembered that she was his mistress, as much as her father was his master.

"I told you I want to be my own master; but that doesn't mean I go around growling because I have a little work now. I'm not afraid of work."

He began to wonder, as he spoke, if he hadn't been allowing himself to become uselessly discontented.

Persis shook her finger at him and spoke with the greatest solemnity she could command.

"Arnold Wade, you are the tenth or

twelfth cousin of the Armstrongs, I don't know which; but I have lived with my dear father for a number of years, and I've seen some of the other Armstrongs in Boston—they're all the same when it comes to pride. If they have to do what anybody tells them, they think they're the most abused people on earth, and they're happiest when ordering others around." Ginger was inclined to take this as a joke, but it made him a little irritated, as well.

"You are the first person who ever addressed me by my full name," he said, to give himself time to consider a good argument against her assertions. Persis was too quick for him this time.

"Don't change the subject, sirrah. We're discussing our characters."

"Our? I thought this was all about me."

"Well, I just said that to be polite, so you wouldn't think I was taking liberties—we can talk about me afterward."

"In the meantime, I'd like to hear some

just an inch too far and sprawled on the floor.

"The reward of pride!" announced Persis, as he sat up and rubbed the top of his head.

"Well, go on with the lecture; I see I need it."

"Now, Ginger," said Persis, as soon as they regained their composure, "you know that isn't what I meant at all. Possibly my illustration was poorly chosen, but I wished to be emphatic. I just know you have the notion that there is something shameful about serving."

Ginger responded quickly, "If I have, I'm not the only one," and then was sorry he had spoken, for fear she might take his remark as a reflection upon his master, which he did not intend at all. To his relief, Persis disregarded his interruption, and continued with what he afterward teased her about as "her sermon."

"It isn't our station, it's our inner

thoughts that count. I read that in my book of Golden Sentiments last night."

"Yes, ma'am," Ginger said with great meekness.

"You're too good for this kind of work—I mean chopping wood and so on—and you know it."

Ginger raised his brows.

"I'm still suffering from that Armstrong pride," he murmured.

"You are discontented and I don't blame you ——"

"Thanks."

"The wrong part comes in when you feel ashamed of your work. It is just as noble to rub horses as it is for my father to direct his shipping, if you look at it in the right way."

"Is that another Golden Sentiment?"

"Now, Ginger, I don't believe you are getting the full benefit of my careful instruction."

"Indeed, yes. You are making up for

my lack of moral instruction in the dark days before I came to New England."

"Exactly. You should be grateful, I assure you, because I wouldn't go to all this trouble for every one. After all, you are to go about your daily tasks with a chastened and contrite heart."

"What's that?"

"I'll explain the meaning of those words when we come to them in the next reader—they're in there, I remember."

"I shall take your words of wisdom to the bottom of my heart, Miss Persis. Just you observe me in the future."

"Don't look so saintly—it doesn't seem natural for you."

"How well you know me!"

"Now you conjugate the verb 'to be' while I rest. I don't want to talk you to death."

At first, merely amused, later reflection brought Ginger to the unwilling conclusion that Persis had said several true things

which he would do just as well to think upon. To himself, he said:

"I've been so used to seeing slaves do the kind of work I'm at now, while white men sit around and don't lift a finger, that I imagine myself a lowly creature, when I'm not; still, I do think Persis stretched it a little. But I won't be too proud to take a rebuke."

Undoubtedly, Ginger had other Armstrong qualities in his blood.

CHAPTER VIII

AN INVITATION TO TEA

THROUGH the year that followed, Ginger's determination to learn never slackened. Persis brought him more of her former school-books, and it was not long before he could teach her more mathematics than she had had herself. Ginger found that he was naturally adapted to figures, and piloted himself through two advanced texts which she brought from her father's library.

The education given to young ladies in such academies as Persis had attended was very meager. It was not thought necessary for a well-bred girl to know much beyond music and fancy-work and how to be agreeable.

“And of course, you don't want to know

how to net a purse or paint china," she told him.

What geography, history, and other studies she had had she helped Ginger to acquire, and with the quickness of an eager mind and a natural taste for learning, he went through the text-books with her.

"Goodness, how you do learn!" she exclaimed once. "You finish these books three or four times faster than I did."

"That's because I'm older," Ginger informed her. "You were just a little girl when you had some of these things. I ought to be able to do them faster."

"Yes, and of course I never concentrated the way you do. I was always thinking of something else when I should have been studying. La, there was so much to think about in the seminary, too! There was always something exciting going on, like the time Abigail was found to be wearing false curls and Miss Pinkham wrote home and told her mother, and there was such a ter-

rible time because Abigail's people are awfully pious about things like that."

"I don't see what any girl wants to wear false hair for," grinned Ginger, "unless she's bald."

"Well, sir, you don't understand subtle things like that. But I'm ever so glad of the chance to go through these studies with you; I never could remember the principal European rivers before, and I believe I know them now for the first time."

"You ought to," laughed Ginger. "You've made me repeat them so often. Anyhow, I'm glad I have you to help me pronounce all these names."

"Now, Ginger, you know that is an empty compliment," protested Persis gravely. "You've lived around where there are sailors so much of the time that I don't believe you hardly need to look at a geography at all. You know about places I've never even heard of."

"But there's one thing I surely don't

know a thing about, and that's history. Now I wonder if I can remember which emperor ——"

And thus they would go on.

Every lesson accomplished gave him a feeling of satisfaction, as though he had mounted one more step on a long flight of stairs. Miss Liddy soon discovered that her kitchen was being used as a schoolroom several nights a week, and after cautioning Persis not to tire her eyes, granted them an extra candle. Caleb inquired now and then how the young scholar was progressing and would always add:

"Larnin'll never do ye any harm, lad."

Ginger had no real chance to make friends, for he was kept too busy and rarely had a moment to spare on his errands into town. At first, he rather missed the numerous companions whom he had had in Jamaica, for Ginger was gregarious by nature. Caleb was not very lively company, although he took to Ginger from the first

and talked whenever he got the chance. Sometimes, Ginger felt lonely and depressed, and wished he had never left an easy pleasant life for such a hard-working existence. He had plenty of time to reflect on these things when he was doing some quiet job like polishing the silver—Miss Liddy never could have anything shine enough, and in addition to all the tableware, there were a great number of candlesticks and Persis's tea set and trays and the statuettes on the parlor mantel.

He met Zed and Joel several times in Salem. They were always together, and they always greeted him cheerily, but he had no opportunity to make other acquaintances.

Barton Ridgely, he began to see now and again. His sister and Persis had become very warm friends, and as the two girls were always visiting back and forth, Bart occasionally came to the Armstrong mansion, too. Ginger always greeted him with the

utmost good-will, managing to treat him in a genial, lofty manner which indicated that *he* was the superior, and not Bart, the silly snob, as Ginger privately called him. This attitude enraged Bart, and Ginger would hide a grin and whistle and make some remark like—

“Been down to the docks lately? But I suppose you don’t like to go near those tough sailors. They might get rough, you know.”

Sarcasm such as this went a little over Bart’s head, but he knew that he was being made fun of in some way, and he would glower in silence as Ginger led his horse away. One day, Bart and his sister Jennie and Persis had all been riding together. There was a pleasant cedar-shaded lane not far from the house, an ideal stretch for a brisk canter, and Persis often rode there in her pony-cart—she had to be ladylike most of the time.

Ginger used this lane as a short cut to the

town stores and markets—the word “short cut” must be taken in rather a poetic sense, for it was really the longest way; but he liked it the best. He was swinging along, his hands in his pockets, enjoying the warm summer air, when in the distance ahead, he saw Persis and her friends trotting slowly toward him. They were on their way home.

“Persis is riding Black Pearl,” thought Ginger, moving to the side of the lane. “She’s a tricky horse, that mare,—always wants to bite.”

Although the riders were too far away for him to see their faces, he knew which of the two girls was Persis, by the color of the horse and also by the bright green riding-habit which Persis wore, its long folds a vivid splash of color on one side. She moved a little ahead of the others, turning her head and nodding her plumed hat, as if urging them to come on faster. Suddenly, something shot across the road right in front of her horse. Ginger saw that it was

a small pig, evidently running from the field which lay back of the cedar-trees. The frightened mare reared and plunged, then dashed wildly forward, while Persis tugged in vain at the reins. Bart and Jennie immediately spurred after, but Black Pearl was too swift for their mounts, and in that treacherous dash Persis would have been thrown—the more easily, since being a girl, of course she rode side-saddle—had it not been for Ginger.

Ginger did not stop to think of his own danger. He darted forward as Black Pearl came abreast, seized the bridle and gripped it with all his force. After a frightened plunge, the black mare stood still, trembling and rolling her eyes. Ginger had been dragged several feet, and stood rubbing his hand where the bridle had cut his palm.

"Ginger, you have saved my life!" exclaimed Persis, making no move to dismount.

She had turned pale, but otherwise showed not the slightest fright at what had occurred.

"She's all right now," replied Ginger, rubbing the horse's nose. "Good day, Miss Armstrong."

"'Miss Armstrong'!" echoed Persis laughing. "You haven't called me that for an age! Wait, Ginger"—for he was going on his way—"I want you to ——"

Her words were drowned out by the noisy arrival of her companions.

"Are you all right? Don't stay on that beast!" Jennie was crying in her shrill excited voice.

"I am so glad you stopped Black Pearl," was Bart's commendation. "You've got lots of presence of mind, Persis. If I could have reached you just a second sooner ——"

"*I* had nothing to do with it," retorted Persis, who knew perfectly well that Barton must have seen the whole action. "I owe my life to Ginger. Ginger," address-

ing him in her most gracious and dignified manner, "when you return from your errand, I would like the pleasure of your company at tea—my friends, I know, would love to meet you."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Ginger solemnly, seeing the twinkle in her eyes. "I accept your invitation with pleasure." He did not know whether this was the right thing to say or not, but it sounded effective. Bowing, he went on his way, casting a glance at Bart, who completely overlooked his existence.

As soon as he was out of sight past a turn in the lane, Ginger took to his heels and ran. He performed his errand—it was to purchase salt fish—in record time, and sprinted all the way back to the Armstrong mansion. The reason for this extraordinary speed was that Ginger knew the punctual hour at which Miss Liddy served afternoon tea, and he wanted time to make himself presentable. He astonished the housekeeper

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by a tremendous session of scrubbing his face and hands in the kitchen.

“What are you cleaning up for in the middle of the day?” she wanted to know, watching him emerge from a sea of soap-suds.

Ginger explained, and Miss Liddy raised her eyebrows.

“Miss Persis invited you to drink a cup o’ tea with her? Why, she’s got company!”

“Yes, I know.” Ginger did not tell her the reason for the invitation, and he could see that she thought it very strange, for she was one of those faithful old servants who believe strictly in social position. Ginger thought about this as he wrestled with his hair, which had an ungovernable tendency to rise in the world. Liberally slapping water on the comb, he felt a little uncomfortable. It was in moments like this, when he saw that he was looked upon as a mere ignorant bond-boy, that he always made extra resolutions to learn so that sometime

he would be in a position where no one would dare to look down on him. He put on a clean shirt, polished his shoes with a rag, and was obliged to call himself ready. Appearance had never worried him before, but he did feel that his clumping shoes and coarse patched clothes were a strange sight in the small south parlor where tea was served. However, there was a good deal of self-confidence packed under his red hair, and Persis set herself to make Ginger feel at home and show Bart and Jennie that he also was her friend and equal.

Jennie was a plump good-natured girl, and she was greatly excited over Ginger's "heroic rescue," as she kept calling it, much to his discomfiture. She wanted to know about Jamaica, and Ginger soon found himself talking freely. To his secret amusement, this made Bart violently jealous. His stories of the West Indies and of the sea put Bart in the background, where that young gentleman very sulkily stayed.

CHAPTER IX

CHRISTMAS GUESTS

THUS summer went by, and autumn arrived one night with fairy torches that lit the maples and burned the elm-trees into pure gold. Ginger rose in the vaporous white mornings, to be amazed anew each day as the color deepened everywhere around him. It was his first sight of autumn.

“Another first thing for me,” he told Persis. “When I stood on the deck of the *Silver Wing* as we sailed into the harbor, I thought nothing could be more colorless and drab than Salem; after Kingston, everything looked one shade of gray. But now, what gorgeous colors! When I look off in the distance, it makes me think of the wings of our birds in Jamaica, spread out in a great blaze.”

The vivid green faded from the meadows, and the echo of cawing crows carried from one stone-walled field to another. Golden-rod claimed the unsown land for its own, and the bright blue asters, the starry Saint Johnswort, ragamuffin tansy and tickweed—all danced up and down the roadways and encroached on fenced-in gardens as near as they dared. The disk of a sunflower was as large as the harvest-moon, and grapes hung in warm pendants, indigo under their silver bloom. The frost-painted leaves dropped all too soon, and Ginger raked together the softly rustling piles and watched them burn with blue smoke through the hazy air. The ground hardened under foot, and where only a little while ago he had turned up furrows of soft earth in the garden, now were hard cracked ridges and frost-bitten clods.

Then the distant landscape faded, and the reds and yellows turned old and withered brown; trees that to-day were clothed in

quaker-hued leaves, to-morrow stood against the sky, bare and chill. Ice formed regularly in the morning on pans of milk and water, heavy fogs rolled in from the sea. The first snow fell, a quick flurry; then in another week, a real storm, and winter was on.

For the first time in his life, Ginger saw snow. He stood with his nose against the window-pane, watching the soft feathers fall. Then he rushed outside, to feel the wet flakes on his cheek, and as they came down faster and thicker, he picked up a handful and made his first snowball which he sent flying in Caleb's direction with great vigor.

"I bet you this be different from Jamaica," chuckled Caleb, successfully ducking the ball, which smeared the wall behind him instead of his ear.

"If Lop could just see this!" thought Ginger, remembering his old friend for the first time in quite a while. It was odd to

him how quickly all the old life was sinking into the past.

Ginger heard from Miss Liddy that the *Silver Wing* was due in a few days, and he kept a lookout, hoping he would be lucky enough to see her come in; he was, but he scarcely recognized her, for she was sheathed in ice from a raging storm, and glittered like a silver-plated vessel.

And when he would go on errands into the town, he could slide down the hill on a glaze of ice; and he did more than slide, at that, for he caused Caleb a great deal of amusement one day by slipping on the ice and waving his arms and legs wildly in the air before he righted himself.

Christmas was coming, and for days ahead, Ginger sped from one window to another with arms full of wreaths, hurried to place evergreens and holly on the mantel and around the doors, chopped wood with Caleb for extra big fires, helped Miss Liddy take pies and puddings from the oven,

shelled nuts, shovelled snow, and went around with fir twigs and needles perpetually decorating his red head, as though he, too, were festively ornamented along with the rest of the house. It gave him a moment's regret to kill the turkeys and geese—he had tended them all year and they were his pets. But he had little time to mourn gobblers and ganders, when he must dash down to the post to mail Christmas invitations, with a cloud of plucked feathers trailing behind him. Ginger was one of those happy people, adaptable to almost anything they attempt, and every one made good use of him during these holiday preparations. Lessons were temporarily abandoned, for Persis must get ready to receive the cousins and friends who were due to arrive in two or three days, depending on the state of the highways. So long as her father allowed her perfect freedom in running the household, hospitality would never be lacking. The Armstrong mansion was like a

huge Christmas cake, frosted with snow and fringed with icicles which glittered in the intermittent sunlight. The elm-trees glowed like glazed pottery in their icy covering, and the soft silence of December was broken only by sleigh-bells or snapping branches.

The guests arrived, and there were extra horses to be put up, and the never-ending task of clearing the front steps of heavy wet snow. Miss Liddy's kitchen and her little back parlor became suddenly animated with the presence of two lady's maids, two coachmen, and three other men servants. Caleb liked society, and was in his element listening to accounts of the bad roads and the general stable gossip, as they all stood around a table heaped with cold meats, jams, meat pies, and dried fruits.

Ginger hung the coachmen's great coats in front of the fire to steam dry, and lugged, it seemed to him, hundreds and hundreds of loads of wood from the shed outside to

the boxes by the hearths. Miss Liddy had little time to visit, even with the help of two girls in the kitchen just for the Yuletide season, for she must be baking and roasting every minute, and sending Ginger down cellar all the time for more of everything.

One of the lady's maids was a jolly young girl, rather pert, who put on airs before the other servants, but was apparently of a garrulous disposition, for every time Ginger passed by she called him "Red-head," (which he did not like at all) and asked a breathless question or two about anything she could think of; in return for his answers, retailing some scrap of gossip about the Armstrongs. She would stand in front of the fire with a frilled cap on her head, watching everything that went on with great eagerness.

"Are you Aunt Myrah's maid?" inquired Ginger, carrying in four mince pies.

"La, my dear! I've told you that three times already," replied the girl, patting a

row of false curls and reaching for a slice of mince pie. "I assure you she wouldn't care to hear you call her 'aunt,' because she is monstrous anxious to be thought very young!"

"Aunts may be young."

"Sometimes, but it does sound elderly-like, don't you ——"

But Ginger had disappeared. In such scraps of conversation, he learned the names and relationships of all the guests and the various oddities of each; for Mattie thought it a great joke on her superiors to discover their every weakness. Her name, by the way, was Mathilda, and she showed some pique when Ginger jokingly addressed her as "Mattie."

"It does not befit my position in Miss Myrah's household," she declared between mutton pie and coffee. "Neither is it my right name ——"

"No," answered Ginger, as he stacked up empty dishes. "And my name isn't 'Red-

head '—it's Arnold," with which he grinned above the plates and hurried away.

After that, she made no comment on his calling her Mattie.

The next morning after the arrival of the guests saw a slight lull, as every one was tired, and the travellers slept late. The cooking and baking went on as ever, but Ginger was of little service here. He had carried in so many loads of fire-wood in the last few days that he had the satisfaction of seeing roaring fires and full wood-boxes in every room, and took the welcome opportunity to sit down and eat.

"O dear!" Mattie opened her mouth in a wide yawn over her breakfast. "I suppose your mistress still sleeps, Sarah, dear?"

Sarah, the other maid, was a frigid person who appeared to exist contentedly in the contemplation of her own small importance. "Naturally, she is fatigued."

"So be us poor maids, but we have to be up and around shaking lavender over every-

thing and winding ribbons and we don't know what all," cheerily declared Mattie.

Ginger was eating with them, and he poured more coffee for all three. Breakfast had been a continuous affair all morning, and he had been too busy to get his own with Caleb earlier, so Miss Liddy had ordered him to eat with the maids.

"Don't mind if they tilt their noses in the air," she had said. "That Miss Sarah do look through me like I was nothing."

"I am much more weary than my mistress," Mattie was saying. "But what a time I shall have when she arises! She insists on an abominable French coiffure, and I must curl and frizz until she believes she looks years younger, although her extraordinary pains merely display her right age."

"Very bad taste, I would say," Sarah condescended to respond, turning to Ginger, who was surprised that she should address him at all, as she did indeed "look through a person" as Miss Liddy had said,

and she seemed to think a mere bond-boy was nobody at all.

“Your mistress is very genteel and proper, Master Ginger.”

“Yes, she is,” he agreed, thinking that Sarah was coming out of her shell. “I don’t like these snobby kind of servants,” he thought. Aloud, he added, “Miss Persis is the most charming young lady I have ever seen.”

“Very true,” nodded Sarah, sagely, “although naturally you would be prejudiced in the favor of a relative you have known so intimately.”

“La, are you an Armstrong?” cried Mattie, opening her mouth and staring in amazement at Ginger.

“Certainly,” Sarah replied for him, smiling a trifle over her knowledge. “Did not you know that he is a cousin, through Anna Wade, who used to be Miss Shelby?”

“Well, but I never dreamed!” exclaimed Mattie. “And I might have guessed it, too,

since Mr. Armstrong holds him in such wonderful favor."

Ginger looked up quickly. This was the first he knew of any wonderful favor.

"Mr. Obed Armstrong is a man of strong character," said Sarah, wisely, becoming almost chatty under the unconcealed interest of her audience. "He has his good reasons, Master Ginger, for keeping you in such a—er—low sort of service for a time."

Ginger stopped eating.

"For a time?" What was Sarah talking about?

"Miss Armstrong says you have a fine future before you," put in Mattie, anxious to contribute all she knew. "But I didn't know you were one of the family."

Ginger looked down into his cup, and thought how kind Persis had been to him and how anxious she was for him to get ahead.

"My mistress thought it very strange that a relative should be a bond-boy," con-

tinued Sarah, "and I believe she said so to Mr. Armstrong. My mistress always speaks her mind; she does despise any evasions or hints."

"What did he say?" asked Mattie, who could never restrain her curiosity.

Ginger held his cup in the air, waiting.

"I wasn't present, so how could I know? But Mr. Armstrong never does anything without reason, and my mistress seemed perfectly satisfied with his explanation, whatever it was. She expressed a wish to see this fortunate Jamaica cousin. She says that Mr. Armstrong has things in store for Master Wade."

"Fortunate?" echoed Ginger, wholly mystified. "Now what can she mean?"

CHAPTER X

GINGER'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT

CHRISTMAS DAY dawned through the soft fall of snowflakes, a day when everything in the world seemed to be encrusted with silver and robed in purity. Through the star-spun flakes, firs and evergreens made their own Christmas garlands against the deep-clouded sky; the little tracks of birds, where Persis had scattered bread crumbs, were covered up as quickly as they were formed. Ginger knocked a shower of spun glass about his head, bumping into the icicle-fringed stable door. Rising sleepily from bed that morning, he thought he was dreaming and seeing a picture of Jamaica—but it was only the rime on his window-pane, etched in tropic ferns and leaves with elf-like delicacy.

"Merry Christmas!" shouted Caleb, drawing water from the pump, while his breath hung in a heavy cloud before his face.

"Merry Christmas!" called back Ginger, moving quickly about his morning chores to keep himself warm.

Ginger had been told to dress carefully for the occasion, and Miss Liddy had given him a new waistcoat, a ruffled shirt of fine linen, a stock, and a new pair of boots which she said Mr. Armstrong had ordered. Ginger felt very grand as he put on these new garments, brushing his coat and surveying himself with satisfaction.

He ate breakfast again with the two maids, and was hardly seated before Mattie cried out:

"Oh, Master Ginger! Look how you've got your stock tied! Let me fix it for you!" And she jumped up, to Ginger's discomfiture, and loosening it about his neck, rearranged it. "Men are so helpless!" she

observed with the indulgent air one uses to children.

"A young man should endeavor to be scrupulously tidy in his appointments," commented Sarah loftily.

Ginger did not want to say that he had never worn a cravat before, so he went on eating in silence, rather glad, after all, that Mattie had been kind enough to remedy his amateur work.

"Now to get ready for church!" said Mattie as they rose from the table. "Mistress'll wear her latest bonnet, I've no doubt, and criticise others for thinking of finery when their minds should be on the sermon."

Ginger learned, to his surprise, that all the servants were to go to Christmas service—Caleb and Miss Liddy and the two girls who came in to help.

"See that you are all ready now," the housekeeper warned him. "Go comb your hair again, and wash your hands good."

Ginger obeyed these instructions, and

then stood waiting by the stove, supposing they were to leave together. But at the last minute, while Miss Liddy was tying her bonnet and Caleb was putting on his earmuffs with a complaint about "pains in my dinged ears"—one of the men servants appeared at the door, and spying Ginger, beckoned with his finger.

"Mr. Armstrong wants you," he called. "Bring your hat—we're starting now."

Wondering why he should bring his hat, and supposing only that he was to do some last trifling service before leaving, Ginger hurried after the man, into the front parlor, where he had had his first interview with Mr. Armstrong early in the year.

It was crowded now with all the relatives and friends, gathering up muffs and robes and moving toward the door. Persis, looking like a snow-fairy in her white fur-trimmed pelisse, nodded to Ginger and exclaimed:

"Merry Christmas!"

"Merry Christmas to you!" he answered, pausing before Mr. Armstrong and awaiting orders.

The old man was bundled up to the eyes, and leaning on his cane as usual. In spite of his feeble appearance, his glance was as piercing as the youngest there, and his voice lacked nothing of strength and will.

"Good morning, Ginger," he greeted. "Will you take my arm and assist me to the carriage? My old enemy, rheumatism, has gained a march on me."

"Certainly, sir."

Ginger gave him the support of his strong arm and shoulder, and thus, followed by Persis, they led the way from the house.

The first carriage was to take Mr. Armstrong and his daughter and two aunts, with room for one more. Ginger stood aside, thinking that this was all that was required of him, but Mr. Armstrong motioned him to take his place—between the aunts.

"Seems as if I'm being advanced in the world," thought Ginger, sitting down and feeling rather ill at ease, especially as Mattie's mistress, who sat on his left, raised a lorgnette and surveyed him openly.

Thus they rode to church, silent for the most part, for with the casual drift of falling snow it was pleasanter to keep chins and mouths buried in furs and mufflers. Arrived at the meeting-house, Ginger assisted Mr. Armstrong to his pew, and found that he himself was to sit, as in the carriage, between the aunts. Persis gave him an amused smile as they settled with quiet decorum, and Ginger decided to accept his position with a good grace, even though he would much rather have been in the back with Caleb and Miss Liddy.

"Bad enough having to come to church at all," he grumbled inwardly, holding a hymn-book with the aunt on his right, who appeared a trifle more human than Mathilda's mistress on his left. "Now if

church does a person any good, as Persis was telling me it does, I ought to be a much better man when I leave here than when I came in. It's a shame for my master to stand up and sing when he cheated a sailor on his wages only a week ago—if what I heard is true. Perhaps he is not so hard as men make out, though I know certainly that he loves money."

In spite of some misgivings, Ginger enjoyed the service. He listened carefully to every word of the sermon, which was a long one; and he determined to turn over in his own mind that which he heard, afterward. It occurred to him, as he sat there, that all the better class of people observed the Sabbath—"and I shouldn't hold out as a heathen," he reflected, "unless I have very good reasons for so doing, when fine intelligent men and women feel it right to go to church." This, by the way, was something Persis had once hinted to him.

These salutary reflections made Ginger

feel so virtuous that he was ready to believe good of any one and every one, and he even began to think that perhaps Mr. Armstrong had recalled his promise of "a chance in the world," and was choosing this method of showing Ginger's promotion.

"Certainly, something has occurred, or he has let words drop, since Mattie and Sarah seemed to agree about my being in favor; and now here I ride between these fine ladies from Boston."

Ginger was not left long to conjecture and surmise. Service came to an end, and the return home to warm fires was hastened as much as possible. The dinner was a long affair of many courses, and as is usual at Christmas, every one ate more than was good for him, masters and servants alike; but it was very enjoyable, all the same. Just after the conclusion to this heavy though festive meal, Ginger was sent for by Mr. Armstrong. The same man servant put his head in the doorway as before, announcing

that "Master Ginger is wanted up-stairs by Mr. Armstrong."

"We're a-gettin' purty fancy, hey?" grinned Caleb, as Ginger hurried to obey the summons.

Up-stairs, as he knew, meant the small private sitting-room where Mr. Armstrong stayed when he wished to be alone or undisturbed, or where he occasionally interviewed men on business which apparently could not be conducted in his offices down by the docks. Ginger had been into this room two or three times with wood, and once he had been commissioned to polish the andirons, so he was perfectly familiar with the aspect of the room. It faced the sea, and through the thin white curtains a view of the whole harbor was obtained. The furniture was dark and heavy, of serviceable appearance, which, with a large desk and a case full of books and rolls of papers, gave it the air of an office. The walls were hung with numerous prints,

etchings, and paintings of ships—merchantmen, British and French cruisers, sloops, whalers, brigs, schooners—every type of vessel had its image hung against the dark flowers of the wall-paper; and in the spaces between these pictures were maps and charts of the Seven Seas and the continents. Beside the desk was a large globe, and above it, a ship's model carved during some long voyage to relieve the monotonous hours. To the official air of the room was offered as by contrast, bright rugs and a snapping fire, and a green plant in one of the window-seats.

Ginger had never seen Mr. Armstrong in this room, and observing him now, seated in an armchair before the desk, he thought that the whole chamber had a changed atmosphere; just what, he could not have said, although if he had been able to formulate in words the vague impression he received, he would have said that the air seemed vitalized and animated, as though it were

filled with the strong spirit of the old man who sat there at his desk.

"Stand there," ordered Mr. Armstrong, waving his stick to a place in the light.

Ginger recalled that on the first occasion of their meeting, he had been similarly motioned.

"Young man, I have a very pleasant communication to make to you," he began in his dry decisive way. "My daughter informs me that you are making rapid headway in the acquisition of learning. Is she right?"

"I am doing my best, sir," Ginger made answer to the implied question. "Miss Armstrong has been so kind ——"

"I know; my daughter has the most generous heart in the world." The old man's face almost softened, as his voice truly did, when speaking of his beloved child. "She tells me that you are proficient in mathematics, and I see you write a fair hand." He indicated a sheet of paper on the desk,

and Ginger was surprised to see that it was one of his own exercises.

"Persis must have taken this!" he thought.

"Now, sir," said Mr. Armstrong, "I am going to promote you. You have worked well enough in your capacity as servant, but I need a clerk in my office, and I think you can fill the place. I can find a number of suitable boys who will be able to rub down my horses and feed my poultry, but it is not so easy to get some one for my business whom I feel that I can trust. Your indentures will be cancelled, and you will start in under John Lang, who will teach you what is necessary. The work will be routine, perhaps monotonous—it doesn't matter; I expect you to do it well. The main thing is, I am going to watch you; and if you have the character I think you have, I will advance you as I see fit. I need more help as I grow older, and my shipping has increased in the last five years to a point

where I must consider enlarging my office equipment. There is no reason why you should not learn quickly ——"

"Oh, sir, I want to learn the shipping-trade more than anything!" Ginger could not help bursting out eagerly, as he felt that his great ambition was going to be realized at last.

Mr. Armstrong watched Ginger keenly as he spoke, but made no response to his impulsive statement.

"I need some one, and I think you can fill the place—that is the sum and substance of it. I *expect* you to make good; there is no reason why you should not, and as I told you once before, excuses don't weigh with me. In the first place, I won't listen to an excuse. If I give you work, it's to be done, willy-nilly. You've some new clothes, and they will be plenty good enough for down there. Report to Mr. Lang to-morrow morning, and he will show you what to do. That is all."

“Sir, I must thank you for your great kindness.”

“I am not advancing you because you have taken my fancy, although that is what my dull-witted cousins think. If you can be of more use to me in my office, there you shall stay.”

“Then I shall thank you by working as hard as I can,” Ginger declared earnestly, backing away and finally leaving the room, as Mr. Armstrong did not reply.

“I know he isn’t moving me down to his office for charity!” laughed Ginger, jumping down the stairs three at a time. “But a real chance at last! A chance! I can learn the business—he said he would promote me—I’ll get a book on navigation, so I’ll know that end of it, too—*he* started out by sailing as a seaman before the mast——”

Ginger saw it all in quick golden flashes. A fine future, prominence, wealth, adventure, everything all at once in a wild medley of happy anticipation. He was so excited

that he ran down the hallway, almost knocking over Persis, who was standing outside the kitchen door.

"Excuse me—I didn't see you——" gasped Ginger, breathlessly.

"No, I should say not! How could you see anybody, flying along like a bird? Tell me—what did Father say?"

"I'm promoted—I'm to go to work to-morrow in his office—Mr. Lang is to show me all about it. I know I've got more brains than he has—to-morrow——"

"Now—now! I'm just as excited as you are, I assure you. I thought that was why he sent for you, but I wanted to make sure. Isn't it wonderful?"

"The best Christmas present in the world!" laughed Ginger, exultantly. He felt as if the earth were his. The old depression, the feeling of hopelessness, was gone. And all at once, he realized to whom he owed so much of his good fortune.

"Persis, if it weren't for your help, I'd

never have had this opportunity," he declared earnestly.

"Oh, that's nothing! If you were stupid and could not learn, or contented and didn't care whether you learned at all, my help would have been worthless. I knew you were made for something better than a mere bond-boy! I felt it in me!" She smiled in great satisfaction that she had so correctly foretold his future.

"Don't creep in the background like that! I owe everything to you, and I'll never forget it. I don't know how to repay you now, but some day, maybe I'll be able to. You just wait and see if I don't."

"That's the way to talk! Do not let anything discourage you. Maybe you'll be junior partner some day. My father will need some one, ten years from now—God willing that he lives."

"Well, I don't want to brag now. It's a lot better to act than talk—that sounds like this morning's sermon, by the way. If I

do my best, I guess I don't need to worry about results."

"No, they will take care of themselves."

"If I can just make good!"

"You will!" declared Persis. "Isn't it just splendid?"

"A real chance!"

And all the rest of that day, and through his dreams that night as he lay by his rime-paned window, the words formed themselves into a kind of music that danced on and on, beckoning into the future.

CHAPTER XI

GINGER'S NEW JOB

THE next morning Ginger awoke with the automatic thought of carrying in more wood—and then quickly came the recollection of the change, the realization that wood-carrying was over.

“Instead of a milk-pail I’ll be holding a pen,” he thought, cheerfully, dressing in the best clothes and descending his ladder with a new fresh consciousness of how pleasant the world looked early in the morning.

The sun was shining. No more falling snow, but clear light everywhere on a sparkling silver picture. The roosters were crowing furiously, and the east was still rose-pink from the sunrise. Stamping the wet snow from his boots on the stone step,

Ginger entered the kitchen, ready to tell Miss Liddy the good news.

But the housekeeper forestalled him.

"So I've lost my helper!" she greeted him cheerily, her hands full of cups and saucers.

"You'll have some one else," answered Ginger, sitting down at the table with a wonderful sense of leisure and luxury.

"Yes, some green bumpkin that'll have to be taught everything, most like! But I'm glad enough for your good fortune, Ginger. You are a bright boy, as I always gave you credit for being."

Ginger thought this breakfast the best he had ever tasted, the weather seemed more bracing than he had ever known it, and every one with whom he spoke was the best-natured person in the world. In the height of his spirits, he set off for the offices by the docks, whistling at the top of his voice and kicking up frosty clouds of white snow at every step. How could he ever regret

Kingston? It seemed impossible, now—and yet not so long ago, he would have given anything for an opportunity to return to the old life. But it was like a dream that was fast disappearing from memory. The warm, idle existence, as lazy as the tropic breeze that ruffled the palm-leaves, was as distant as though it belonged to another life.

Could that Ginger who swung bare legs on an old wharf-pile, sucking fruit and chatting with Lop, be the Ginger who now strode down the hill, shoulders back, active purpose in the whole set of his figure, and in every current of thought?

“A year can bring a big change,” Ginger reflected, passing under lilac-bushes that held great soft lumps of snow on their branches.

To reach Obed Armstrong's offices, Ginger went by the harbor. After the white snow, piled like thick felt all through Salem, the water and the ships at anchor

were dark and dirty-looking. On the swirling tides rode straws and scraps of rubbish, muddy and unclean. Darkly stained hulls rose into the cold air, surmounted by masts on which sails lay bundled up in their harbor sleep. The sea was foamy with white caps, and a fresh, cold wind made Ginger's cheeks tingle.

It was good to be by the sea in such bright, crisp weather! He loved the sight of the ships, each one a symbol of adventure, from perilous journeys around the Horn, from the West Indies, the Barbary Coast, the far Eastern ports where the air dripped with spices and the sunlight caught the soft sheen of silks; from storm and calm, torrid or temperate zone, they came, flying the flags of many nations, the rigging manned by Yankees, Kanakas, blacks, Islanders, Italians, any one and every one.

"I'll come down here at noon and talk to the sailors," Ginger promised himself.

What a pleasure that would be, after the

long time since he had had any conversation with seafarers! He felt again that nothing could ever alter the indefinable call of the sea—a call that was answered in the tang of salt air, in the restless green breakers, and in the sweep of ocean relieved only by sky.

Here were the offices—Mr. Armstrong's name on a brass sign that needed polishing badly. The small-paned windows were dusty and blurred so that one could scarcely see through them, and the whole building in which the offices were, had a run-down seedy air, as though big trading affairs could never be conducted *here*. There was one cracked granite step leading up to the door, and Ginger stepped on it with the thought that Mr. Armstrong did not care very much about appearances. There was a large iron knocker on the door, green with age and rusted at the corners, molded in the shape of a dolphin's head, with hinges fashioned as highly ornate fins.

"Rather a wicked-looking monster," said Ginger, entering without lifting it, for it had long since slipped into disuse.

The interior was as dusty and musty as might be expected from a view of the blurred windows and general dilapidation. Here were desks piled with ledgers and papers, stools from which the paint was long worn, a ship's lamp, smoking and swinging from the beamed ceiling, a fireplace with a feeble, meager fire burning. Mr. Armstrong's name was lettered on a door that led to his private sanctum—he himself had not yet arrived. Perched at the highest desk, his long thin legs twisted around the rungs of his stool, sat John Lang, the clerk. When Ginger entered, he was hunched over a ledger, biting the feathers on a quill pen, his chin sunk in his cravat, his eyes gazing dejectedly at one of the dusty windows. His bottle-green coat hung in limp tails, and his whole attitude was one of discouragement.

"How do you do?" said Ginger, closing the door and taking off his hat.

"Oh, it's Master Ginger?" The clerk looked around with a start. "Ready to go to work, are you?"

"Yes, I'm all ready." And Ginger pulled off his greatcoat and scarf. "Where shall I hang these?"

"There—in that closet——" John Lang pointed with his quill. "There's a spare nail."

He frowned morosely while Ginger opened the door, which he had not noticed before, due to the darkness of the wall into which it blended, and piled his things on a rusty iron hook. He saw another door with a glass upper part, very dirty, through which he looked at another office where two clerks bent over books. The door was probably closed for greater warmth.

"Now bring a stool up here and I'll show you what you're to do. Master says as how you can figure?"

"Yes, I can figure."

Ginger willingly set to work, and found no difficulty in following the tutelage of the clerk. Mr. Lang had a laborious and roundabout way of explaining things, and went at everything in the longest and most involved manner he could devise; but he made himself reasonably clear, and Ginger had nothing to complain of except his unaccountable sulkiness, and the too apparent fact that he disliked his new co-worker heartily. The truth was, as Ginger perceived before any great length of time passed, that the poor clerk was exceedingly jealous of Ginger, and considered that his own field of duties was encroached upon and his position perhaps threatened by this new clerk. Ginger was sorry for him, yet he could not but think that John Lang was a man of small abilities, and had now risen to his highest capacity.

Ginger went at his work with the greatest enthusiasm, spurred on alike by interest in

his task, and the ardor of his desire to raise himself to a higher position.

"This is different from trimming shrubs!" he thought exultantly, as he dipped his long quill into the pot of ink. "Wouldn't Lop roll his eyes if he could see me now? I wonder if I look the same—I don't feel much like the old Ginger on the Kingston wharf."

Bending over his books in the drab light, he put in his first day as Mr. Armstrong's assistant clerk.

With his prime ambition of some day owning a ship, Ginger kept his ears and eyes open, and let pass no opportunity by which he could listen to conversations, or ask questions, all with the aim of learning. This resolute activity made a much stronger impression on Mr. Armstrong than the boy was at all aware of; he did not suppose himself noticed by his employer, who spoke to him seldom, except when assigning him some piece of work or sending him on an

errand. Mr. Armstrong was taciturn by policy as well as by nature, and was not in the habit of disclosing emotion, or of giving any hint as to his thoughts and opinions; so that while Ginger hoped he was filling his new position with satisfaction, he was in reality the object of keen observation. Obed Armstrong fully realized two concurrent facts; one that he was growing old, and the other, that his business was steadily increasing. He foresaw that within a few years, should all continue in the present tenor, he would need a partner to carry on the work he had built up by himself. Mr. Armstrong's success was largely due to his shrewd judgment of character; his own principles might be open to censure, but he knew how to value worth in others. He saw in Ginger every evidence of intelligence, activity, and laudable ambition, combined with a certain firmness and steadiness of temper gratifying in so young a lad. Ginger could be of use to Mr. Armstrong and

still cost the latter very little. By attaching the boy to him while young, the employer could cultivate a loyalty and interest that would be of the highest value. The day might conceivably come when a partner could be found in the humble clerk, and Mr. Armstrong foresaw that Ginger could, in the meantime, perform many services for him at slight cost—always a prime consideration with him.

Now that Ginger had stepped from under-servant to clerk, he found that his friendship with Persis had arrived at a different plane. They could talk together now with more freedom than before, since they were no longer mistress and servant.

“How’s the office?” Caleb would ask at the end of the day, and Miss Liddy would always warn him about catching cold from the drafts down there.

“I know Mr. Armstrong don’t mend his windows,” she said dryly.

Being so near the water rather recalled

the days at Kingston. In his noon hour, and when he was sent on errands, as he frequently was, Ginger had time to linger on the docks and make friends with the sailors. One such noon, he leaned against a pile of empty crates and watched the endless activities of incoming and outgoing vessels.

CHAPTER XII

SECRET TRADE

A VOICE at his elbow hoarsely remarked:

“Watch them green lubbers on that India brig! They rig like they was all one-handed!”

Ginger observed the old tar who spoke, with a sudden curiosity. His voice, unmistakably, was that of one of the two mysterious men Ginger had overheard leaving Mr. Armstrong's house that night so many months ago. It was more than six months since he had heard that voice, but he had thought of the conversation several times, recalling the whole incident as it had impressed him; and Ginger had a good memory for faces and voices. There could be no mistake, he felt sure.

“What vessel are you on?” he asked curiously.

The sailor pushed his shiny black hat still farther back on his head.

"*Silver Wing*," he replied. "That one out there to leeward—next the whaler ——"

"Are you one of her crew? I thought I knew them all when she left here last trip."

"I shipped aboard at Madagascar, where they lost a man; she's a treat to the eyes; trim as a bird—ain't she?"

"Yes, she surely is."

"She's the nicest piece of sea-timber I've sailed for a good long while."

"Have you ever shipped out under Mr. Armstrong before?" Ginger put the question as carelessly as he could, hoping to find more clues, if clues there were, to that long-past conversation.

"Yes," answered the sailor readily, still watching with a disgusted eye the hermaphrodite brig whose men all seemed so clumsy and obviously new to sea life. "I was on the *Amanda Jane* last two years, that run back and forth 'tween Africa and ——" he

stopped short and looked at Ginger for the first time, apparently. "Thinkin' of ship-pin' afore the mast, lad?"

"No—I'd like to ship some day, but I'm too busy with other things right now."

"Well, I expect you'll do better by stickin' to land."

After a moment's thought Ginger said:

"I'm working for Mr. Armstrong; I think he's letting me have a good chance to learn the business."

"Hmm! Well, if he's got a mind to it, he'll make a thorough ship-owner of you. He don't do things by halves, nohow."

"Didn't you find that last trip to Africa a failure? You had to jettison a lot of cargo, didn't you?" Ginger was thinking of his office records. He had checked off a big loss due to a storm.

The sailor shifted his hat to one side, and still farther back.

"Old man were mad," he said, "when he heard about it—never see a man so mad in

my life, when Cap'n told him about it—I was standin' close, when old man come aboard and found it out."

"Well, of course it couldn't be helped, though, could it? Or did Mr. Armstrong think you ought not to have lightened weight so much as you did?"

"Glory, but he raged up and down, and said we'd oughter run away from the British crusier that was arter us; but we couldn't beat her, not with twice the sail we had. She'd 'a' said she had a right to search us, and what could we have done? Old man said the curse of Heaven was on us, and I don't know what he didn't say." He frowned and continued to watch the work around him.

Ginger looked rather blank for a moment. What did running away from a British cruiser have to do with throwing away cargo in a storm? And what could Mr. Armstrong mean about the "curse of Heaven"? That was surely an odd phrase

to use, no matter how angry—and then a sudden, almost sick feeling overcame him.

“Did you—do you like that kind of business?” he asked, speaking cautiously, scarcely daring to admit the suspicion that seemed so clear.

“Me? No, lad, I don’t much—but they’re only blacks. Can’t regret the ones that’s gone, when there’s thousands of ’em waitin’ to be run in.”

Ginger had heard enough, and he walked away to think by himself.

So Obed Armstrong was a slave-runner! Ginger remembered the talk with Zed and Joel and he had heard many stories of this illegal trade; how the poor natives were chained into gangs in Africa and marched from their native inland jungles to the coast, where they were bought and packed into the holds of vessels and shipped to the slave-markets, in spite of the laws prohibiting their import. He had heard, too, how sometimes the unfortunate captives were

flung overboard in order to keep the vessel from being caught red-handed.

He shivered to think of it. The callous indifference of the sailor—but then, aboard ship, the captain's word is law, and the men had no choice but to do as he ordered, regardless of their own feelings.

"So Mr. Armstrong was angry!" thought Ginger grimly as he strode back to the office, realizing in the midst of his reflections that he was late. "I'm glad he isn't yet so lost to honor as to be unable to feel for the wholesale loss of who knows how many blacks. But in all his talk about the curse of Heaven on the captain and crew—he forgets to call it down on himself. Then this is the meaning of the conversation I heard! Those sailors were talking about slaves, and Mr. Armstrong's desire for gold that leads him into this trade. It sounded that way, all right, but I didn't want to think it. Now I know it's true. Doesn't he make enough in honorable trans-

actions? These goings-on don't appear on the books, but still he does a large coffee and sugar trade with the Indies."

Ginger had a strong desire to avoid seeing Mr. Armstrong or speaking to him, and happily there were few occasions on which either was necessary. But as he sat on the high stool and worked, the visions of those ships in torrid waters, laden with their human cargo, would come before his eyes, and he would lower his pen and wonder at the hardness of men's hearts—nothing very new to wonder at.

"Church must be doing me good," he told Persis with amusement, one Sabbath afternoon after he had been attending morning service for over a month. "I'm deciding to be honest and upright, and I feel full of righteous indignation when I find out that anybody has lied or stolen or done something like that."

Persis laughed in satisfaction.

"You had good instincts before, but I'm

convinced that regular church attendance helps to confirm them and bring them out better."

"Probably you are right—anyhow, I like to listen to the sermon, and I like to think over what is said. Different points come back to me through the week, and I turn them over in my head and make up my mind about them some way or other."

"You're an independent thinker, aren't you? I'm glad you don't take your opinions ready-made, all set out like the pattern for a dress. Your principles will be much truer if you see for yourself their reason and cause."

"Very true, Miss Fount-of-Wisdom. I ——"

"Now, Ginger ——"

"I was complimenting you. Don't you like it? "

"It sounded rather false. I'm not pretending to be a fount of wisdom, or even a brook, or even a little rill."

“Merely a raindrop? I think you wrong yourself.”

“Now, Ginger!”

“Now, Persis!”

“O dear, you are such a tease! But it is so hard to keep boys on a serious subject for more than a few minutes! I was talking with my friend Janet Spear the other day, and we both agreed that it is something ineradicable in their constitution. Girls can be much more profound.”

“I disagree with you heartily. Girls can never think or talk of anything but new bonnets and parties and false hair and gew-gaws.”

“Indeed, you don’t know anything about it, Master Ginger! You have never heard young women converse together, so why do you dare pass such a judgment, just because you’ve heard some men say that? I believe I’ll take back what I said about your being an independent thinker.”

“Oh, I beg of you! That would be aw-

ful!" declared Ginger in tones of great tragedy. "I am willing to stand corrected and believe that young ladies never discuss any subject lighter than the felicity of a righteous life or the sermons of all the eminent divines ——"

Persis shook her head at him.

"You are hopeless. I shall invite you to drink tea with me this evening, but I warn you that I may ask you whether I shall line my new hat with blue or pink sarsenet; and when you have given me your opinion, I shall discuss the shipping laws with you."

"I'm vanquished! You'd better trim it with pea-green sar—what do you call it? And I'll lecture you on navigation from the business angle, and you can tell me the difference between general and particular average and what F. A. S. means, and the first three marine shipping laws, and—and ——"

"That's enough," laughed Persis. "You wait! Just wait!"

As he talked with her, Ginger wondered how she could be so different from her father—she was everything that was generous and warm-hearted, her father so coldly calculating in all except what related to her.

CHAPTER XIII

THE *SILVER WING* SETS SAIL

ALTHOUGH he tried to discover more concerning his master's secret shipping, Ginger found out nothing, and he remained in ignorance of the extent to which Obed Armstrong was carrying his illegal practice. Ginger suspected that he was not doing this all alone, but that he was sharing his guilt with two or more partners. Of course, he could not prove to himself that this was so, but certainly, Mr. Armstrong had many conferences with a certain group of shipping men, always of a semi-secret nature, conducted behind locked doors and in low voices; and Ginger saw him, on one occasion, transfer a large sum of money to one of these men, of which he had no account in the books he kept.

“I wonder,” thought Ginger, “how he would like his daughter to know that he is a slave-runner? And she a member of a society that is working for the freedom of the black man, too!”

Here, for a time, Ginger meditated in some mental confusion as to his own duty. Should he make known what he had learned? This business was against the law.

“In a way, it’s none of my affair,” he mused, “and it would certainly ruin my prospects in life! My master would probably have me shanghaied for my pains. Besides, come to think of it, I haven’t the faintest proof to back up my statement, supposing I made it. Sailors and captains, naturally, would swear I was lying, and my story would only make trouble for me and do no good to any one. I may as well put it out of my mind, so long as I have nothing to do with his underhand plans. If I were being used as his tool, that would be dif-

ferent, but he conducts these little trading ventures without consulting his office staff. I'll be quiet, but I'll keep my eye peeled for a sail, as the seamen say."

So time went by, and if Ginger did not forget what he had so accidentally discovered, his knowledge slipped into an unused corner of his mind, where he seldom thought of it. No more mysterious or enlightening conversations occurred, and no more conferences, at least to his knowledge, between Mr. Armstrong and the men whom Ginger suspected. For a while, he was sure that Mr. Armstrong must have abandoned this trade, for Ginger checked off full cargoes from every vessel, and found no possibility of a ship-load from Africa having slipped in unawares. Slave-ships became a far-off memory, and business went on in its usual orderly way.

In only a few months, Ginger felt that he had learned a great deal. He did not give up his evening studies entirely, although he

had completed almost all the education Persis could give him.

“It’s too bad,” she told him, regretfully, “that I’m not a boy. I should be able to teach you so much more. The proper accomplishments of a young lady are not exactly suitable for you. I have taught you everything now except how to play on the pianoforte, how to work samplers and net purses, how to draw, and how to practise correct deportment. Oh, yes, and French—my teacher at school said I had a very accurate pronunciation. Shall we begin French?”

Ginger’s zeal for knowledge was fully equal to Persis’s ambition to teach, and accordingly, he started on the rocky road of French verbs, although he could not conceive of any particular use for them. Besides this, he studied works on navigation, and with the Armstrong library at his command, he somehow found time to read a number of histories and books on general

literature. He had a taste for reading and gained both pleasure and profit from evenings spent in the library. He and Persis had deserted the kitchen in favor of this room, where, surrounded by books and candles, before a glowing fire, they could pursue the path of learning undisturbed save for the click of Miss Liddy's knitting needles—the housekeeper liked to sit with them, although she spoke seldom except to praise her dear Persis's knowledge or to encourage Ginger to "keep right on ahead." The room was delightfully quiet and homey with a big table to spread their books and papers on, and the pleasant candle-light over all.

Mr. Armstrong kept an observing watch on Ginger, and the result of his careful scrutiny displayed itself when Ginger had worked a little over two years in the office. He had not chafed in this groove, although groove it was, as he had done while doing chores in the garden and kitchen. He did

not suppose it possible that he would be advanced for several years, and his delight may be imagined when he learned that a new prospect awaited him.

When Mr. Armstrong called him into the small inner office which was full of ships' models and charts and maps and dust and cobwebs high up in the corners, Ginger's thoughts were far from another promotion. His mind was busy with the prospect of going fishing with Caleb the following afternoon, and he assumed, in an absent way, that his employer had some errand for him, as usual.

"The *Silver Wing* sails in forty-eight hours," Mr. Armstrong began in his customary abrupt way of plunging into the heart of the matter at once. "I want you to go with her, in company with my supercargo, Mr. Hamill. Can you leave everything as it should be, and be ready in time?"

"Yes, sir!"

Gone was all thought of fishing—here

was something that he had not even dreamed of!

"I have instructed Mr. Hamill," continued Mr. Armstrong in his short, clipped way, "to explain everything to you, and you are to accompany him for the sole purpose of making yourself acquainted with all that he does. You will have an advantage by going with Mr. Hamill, as he is leaving me next year to set up in business for himself in Boston. When he leaves my service, it is possible that I may make you assistant to whomever I take on in his place. Of course, you will be very young, but if you come up to my expectations, your future is assured. I realize that I am advancing you at an unusually rapid rate, and that I shall be putting you in a position of trust and responsibility at a pretty young age. Considering your youth and education this is the more remarkable, but men no older than you, and with no more advantages, have risen by their own boot-straps before this."

"I assure you, sir, I am more grateful to you than I can say!" began Ginger, but Mr. Armstrong raised his hand for him to be silent.

"I understand," he observed, "that you have been acquiring some little knowledge of the French language?"

Persis again!

"Yes, sir," replied Ginger, "I began to study it some time ago, but I'm afraid I'm not very proficient at it."

"Well, I know that you understand it fairly well. I have need of a man who can get along in that language, as it helps down in the Indies. If you fail to learn as I expect you to, or show an inability, due to your youth, to fill the position I have for you, there is still plenty of time ahead. Lack of will or industry I cannot pardon, but I do not expect you to display the wisdom of a man in all things. For my own sake, I am willing to advance you rapidly, because it suits my situation, as I have explained to

you once before. You already know that the *Silver Wing* sets her course for the West Indies. She will probably load cargo from Jamaica, your old home; but the destination can mean little to you. I am giving you plenty of notice for what small preparation you will need, and a new clerk takes your place in the morning."

Again Ginger tried to thank him, but Mr. Armstrong merely shook his head.

"Your labors are sufficient thanks," was all he said.

Ginger left the inner office feeling as though he could fly, so light and happy were his thoughts.

"I'm off on a ship again with a better prospect than ever!"

Adventure called, and the memory of warm tropic seas assailed him. And he was to go on his own favorite *Silver Wing*! He astonished John Lang by slapping him on the shoulder and asking him if he didn't think the world a great place. He con-

tinued to whistle and grin all the afternoon without saying another word, which caused the worthy clerk to bite his pen and gaze at Ginger in perplexed amazement, shaking his head now and then as if to intimate a very ill opinion of such high spirits.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SLAVE-RUNNER

AFTER his Northern stay, Ginger found increased delights in the warm tints and colorful life of the Islands. Everything was as he remembered, only intenser, brighter. Each crowded harbor with its blue waters and green island for background, was a fresh joy. The sun seemed unbearably hot, and he supposed that was because he had grown acclimated to New England. After the monotonous sea voyage, land was welcome in any guise, but doubly so when it brought back so many memories—and always the anticipation of Jamaica, the last port of call.

Mr. Hamill, the supercargo, was an elderly gentleman of a seemingly reserved, dignified character. He talked little and seemed to pass his days in inward reflection.

His eyes, which were small and set close together, had a far-away look, as though his meditations were of an important and absorbing nature. He displayed no animation at any time except when actually discussing business, when he became alive with a tense get-to-the-bottom-of-it air, displaying a keenness and acumen that well recommended him to take charge of Mr. Armstrong's affairs. Ginger thought him a very shrewd man, and respected his ability; but he could not like him, and he suspected that Mr. Hamill returned the feeling. Although the man could not be said to show any active dislike, either in word or action, Ginger was convinced, as their voyage progressed, that they would never get along well together.

Once, as they were sailing out of Haiti, Ginger exclaimed over the beauty of the scenery—the rich tropic green, the blue of the sparkling sea, the white town set amid cascades of flowers.

"Huh!" grunted Mr. Hamill scornfully. "There's more to do on this trip than admire fancy scenery, young man. Being sentimental don't win far in this world. You've got to be hard, hard as steel, if you want to get ahead."

Ginger was nettled, and he was going to retort that there was nothing sentimental about admiring the view, when he thought better of it and held his tongue.

"It's all very fine to be hard," he thought to himself, "but I don't intend to get so steely I won't know a thing in the world except grubbing for money."

On another occasion, they were on land at one of the hot, fragrant little island ports, and a poor lame black, crossing the dusty road, did not get out of Mr. Hamill's way fast enough to suit that gentleman. He kicked the slave and said, "Watch out for your betters, you lazy dog!"

Ginger's bright face darkened. He had always been taught to regard slaves as a lit-

tle lower than the rest of humanity, but Persis had talked to him of the society she belonged to, where they planned some day to make every one free and equal. Without a word, Ginger stooped and helped the poor old man to his feet, for he had been knocked into the dust. He stammered out his gratitude in some strange mixed dialect, but as some of the words were French, Ginger caught enough to know that he was being blessed and thanked.

He and Mr. Hamill then went on, and although the latter said nothing, Ginger saw that he held a very ill opinion of the boy for his action. He made several slighting references to "womanishness," and "softness," but Ginger—with much difficulty—managed to contain his temper.

"He thinks I'm a weak-kneed coward, does he?" Ginger told himself angrily. "Well, he needn't think he's anything to brag about, himself!"

He realized, without being able to put it

into words, that it took more real manliness for him to pick up the negro than it did for Mr. Hamill to knock him down.

"I'm glad we won't have to sail together on more than one trip," he thought, leaning over the ship's rail as they slipped out of Santo Domingo and set sail for Jamaica. "We don't come out in the open and quarrel, or anything like that, but there's a friction between us. I shouldn't be at all surprised if he'd been a pirate in his early days, for he has a rascally look, sometimes, to me; his quietness and the pompous airs he puts on when we go ashore don't strike me as being natural. Mr. Armstrong picks his men well, however, so I shouldn't complain. If I think Mr. Hamill a rascal, there's no knowing what he thinks of me."

Ginger did not allow this little drawback of personal dislike to interfere with a desire to learn all that he could, and he kept faithfully at Mr. Hamill's heels, wherever the latter went, asking innumerable ques-

tions. Mr. Hamill answered readily enough, and seemed willing, in a grudging way, to show off his knowledge of navigation laws, foreign and domestic trade, and the like. As they neared Port Royal, their first stop in Jamaica, Ginger took the opportunity to avail himself of all possible knowledge regarding Jamaica's trade. He knew a great deal already through his harbor life at Kingston, but Mr. Hamill was able to add much, especially regarding the laws, to what he knew.

"There are more laws than are needed, all over the world," Mr. Hamill told him, in a voice of cold disfavor. "We could do better business on half the number."

Ginger was surprised. "Do you think so, sir?" he asked doubtfully. "Don't you think we need a great many regulations? That is, honest men do not, I suppose, but there are so many crooked people that we must be ready for all their tricks."

Mr. Hamill squinted, a habit he had,

which gave him a still more unfavorable appearance in Ginger's eyes.

"If it were not for the laws, we'd all be honest men," he replied dryly. "Now take this Anti-Slave Importation Act that's been in force since 1807. What good has it done America? Not a bit. The only result of it is, that we have to sneak the blacks in instead of shipping them aboveboard and in the open. There's more now since the cotton-gin came in than there ever was before, when there was no law against fetching them in."

"Why import them at all?" demanded Ginger. "Why not abide by the law? Money can be made in other ways than by buying and selling poor human beings. Even if they are heathen, they are our fellow creatures."

Mr. Hamill squinted still deeper.

"Such squeamishness and womanishness doesn't get a man on," he answered. "Let women and girls talk about humanity and

what not if they will, but men must think of business first."

"You will not win out in the end by that sort of conduct," warmly asserted Ginger, now fully convinced that his opinion of Mr. Hamill had been none too strong.

"You missed your calling, didn't you? You'd ought to have been a preacher."

Ginger opened his mouth to make an angry retort, but checked his rising temper. There was no use in bringing on a quarrel. It was plain that they could never think alike.

"Young man, I'm speaking plainly and for your own good. Mr. Armstrong doesn't forget the men who fail him, and if you disappoint him after he's given you this chance you'll ruin your whole life."

Ginger felt himself grow cold all over.

"What, sir, has this well-meant warning to do with our present conversation?"

"Just this: if you entertain foolish notions about slaves, you may as well jump

over the rail now and be done with it. You've started on a voyage you can finish two ways, for if you don't like the looks of the cargo we're taking out of Jamaica, you needn't think you're going to be told to run along and remember not to tell. Oh, no. We don't take risks with wharf-bred youngsters' tongues."

And with this Mr. Hamill clamped his jaw, went back into his customary reserve, and strode away.

CHAPTER XV

GINGER MAKES UP HIS MIND

GINGER'S thoughts were in a turmoil, and what he felt strongest he could not tell, except perhaps anger. He would have liked to fight Mr. Hamill then and there, and he stood watching him as he walked away with a black expression unusual on his sunny face. Ginger had a quick temper, but he also possessed a large measure of self-control, and what is more important, the desire to exercise it. After a struggle he managed to put aside most of his anger and consider as coolly as possible just what kind of position Mr. Armstrong had imposed on him.

"I knew Mr. Armstrong *had* been in the slave-smuggling game, and I knew he was hard and calculating. In a way it's my own fault if I find myself here, but he should not have sent me on a trip like this without giv-

ing me a chance to say whether I would or would not have anything to do with such traffic. At this late date, I can take my choice, and either keep my mouth closed and learn a new angle to the business of his trade, or decide to quit—and then what? Probably be sent overboard with a knife in my ribs, or hit on the head by some convenient accident, if Mr. Hamill's words mean anything; and he isn't the man to talk nonsense. I'm not suffering from any self-deception if I figure out the worst, with a man like Captain Brade at the head of the vessel, and this warm-hearted supercargo at his elbow."

Ginger thrust his hands into his pockets and marched back and forth, glancing off at the horizon occasionally, now dreading to see the land which a half-hour before he had watched for so eagerly. He thought of the ships that made the long sail to Africa, where slaves were captured, or bought from the marauding Mohammedans

and stowed aboard to be brought here to Jamaica, whence they were parcelled out to the States.

“Mr. Hamill can’t bully me into staying with a company that does business like this! Probably he does not believe I have much backbone—‘womanish,’ am I? He’ll receive a little surprise one of these days.”

Ginger’s first impulse was to go to Mr. Hamill and tell him he would have no more to do with the outfit; but he had scarcely taken a step in the direction of the cabin, whither the supercargo had gone, when prudence intervened and suggested a less dangerous and hasty course.

“There’s no use dashing madly into the lions’ jaws,” he told himself sensibly. “While I’m here aboard on the high seas, with all power over my actions given to Captain Brade, I’d only get myself into trouble uselessly; swimming to the nearest island doesn’t appeal to me at this distance. If I can only figure out the way Mr. Hamill

will reason. If I keep still, he'll take it for granted that I have decided to abide by his kind advice. I don't believe he'll give me credit for standing out against the terrible power of my employer. He doesn't start conversations very often by himself, and I'm sure I won't have any more to say to him unless I have to. If my idea is correct, I can land myself at Port Royal without any trouble—and once on land, I believe it will be to my best interest to leave this crew in a big hurry and head for some safer climate."

From this point, Ginger's plans were necessarily hazy and unformed, but that did not trouble him just now; he would take one step at a time, the better to be sure that each step landed him in safety. Far from home and subject to the law of the ship, Ginger was fully aware of his precarious position. Captain Brade was not the man to stand for any nonsense. Ginger was too sensible to think it cowardly to be discreet, and wish-

ing, as he did, that he were in a position to tell Mr. Hamill without delay what he thought of him and his associates, he nevertheless kept to his course of silence. When he and Mr. Hamill met at mess, not a word was exchanged between them. Captain Brade seemed to notice nothing amiss in the silence, always being too much absorbed in eating and remarking on the state of the sky, which now promised a storm. Ginger immediately betook himself on deck after eating, and standing by the wheel, kept a lookout in the direction where land would first be sighted.

The glass was falling rapidly, and he thought he detected a cloud on the horizon, when the man aloft gave out the cry, "Land ho!" And Ginger knew that the distant blur must be Jamaica. A real cloud, meanwhile, was appearing, and that with a rapidity which promised the threatened wind and rain before the crew would have time to furl the sails.

"All hands!" was called, and even to the cook, carpenter, and steward, all below hurried up and sprang into the rigging. Ginger went below when the first spatter of rain came down, for he was not dressed to stand a wetting. The storm beat the sea into mountains of engulfing waves, and not until dawn did it die down, although even then there was a strong gale and a heavy sea. Ginger enjoyed his own reflections; he scarcely slept through the long night, with the creaking sounds of the ship and the pounding of water in his ears, and, most of all in his mind, the looming up of an uncertain future.

"I'm through with Mr. Armstrong," he repeated to himself. "What am I going to do now?"

Gone were the days when he had been content to loll in the sun and exist in perfect ease so long as he had enough to eat, the minimum of clothing, and shelter. The young scamp who had waited that morning

for the *Silver Wing* to take him from Kingston had somehow disappeared in the warm past that lay associated with tropic days and nights and a general disinclination for work or serious purpose. That idler on sun-blazed docks had imperceptibly become the boy who lay now in his bunk, gloomily trying to piece together his cherished future, despondent because it seemed as though his dreams would have to be remodelled on a much smaller scale.

“I wanted to own a ship just like the *Silver Wing*,” he reflected, “and I used to think about sailing to foreign lands,—India and China and Java and the different ports the sailors talk about. But now, how can that ever be? According to my friend Mr. Hamill, if I decide to back out of this undertaking, Mr. Armstrong will not only dispense with my services to himself, but he will see that I am useful to no one else. Perhaps Mr. Hamill exaggerates matters, hoping to throw a scare into me so I’ll be

all the quieter. But I don't want to bank on possibilities. If I know that the *Silver Wing* is a slave-runner, that knowledge is dangerous, and something will be done to close my mouth—such as sinking me to Davy Jones' locker, for example. However, I'm not going to be such easy prey, if I know my way about in this world. It's a time for me to be cautious and use my wits."

Bracing himself with such reflections, Ginger felt a little more optimistic, and was able to sleep at last.

The storm had entirely abated by morning, and again the white sails curved against blue sky, and sunlight flickered in dazzling reflection on every bit of metal.

"But we're not making for Port Royal, are we?" exclaimed Ginger to the mate, who was scanning the shore, a mile or so away, through the spy-glass.

The man did not answer for a moment, but apparently having viewed all he cared

to, dropped the glass from his eye and glanced at Ginger.

“Orders was changed, back at Santo Domingo. Didn’t Mr. Hamill tell you?”

“The last I heard, we were headed for Port Royal,” Ginger replied shortly.

Orders at Santo Domingo? There had been letters there, waiting for the *Silver Wing*, and one of them had been from Mr. Armstrong, sent ahead by a direct vessel which had reached there before the *Silver Wing*, cruising slowly about among the Islands. Ginger had not seen the letter, and Mr. Hamill had mentioned it only casually, with a few references to certain business orders which it contained.

“Now I understand,” thought Ginger. “Mr. Armstrong, probably, had not decided that this vessel was to carry slaves on the return trip, or more likely still, he had not completed some negotiation or other which would provide the slaves—no knowing just what. At any rate, I may now give

him credit for at least not sending me into a trap, as I thought before. Maybe he didn't intend to introduce me so suddenly to his secret trade—I'll give him the benefit of the doubt."

This shrewd guess, by the way, happened to be true, although Ginger, of course, did not know it certainly until long after.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HIDDEN LAGOON

GINGER stood watching their approach to land, too much absorbed in the question of his flight to remember the mate, who was using the glass again.

“See that lagoon?” the man pointed suddenly. “You can’t see the lagoon, exactly—it’s more like a bayou—see that dark opening in the green? That’s where we’re heading.”

“There isn’t any town in sight,” observed Ginger, who saw nothing save green verdure, tangled trees above a limestone cliff. Yes—there was the break that marked the hidden anchorage.

“No—there’s a town a ways back, but that won’t trouble us any. The blacks are all waiting here, and we’ll just slip ’em on without any notice and haul for home.”

Ginger turned aside, thoroughly disgusted.

"I'll watch my chance, and make for that town," he thought, realizing that he must keep his wits about him and not let his mind wander. It would not be long before he would be ashore, and urged by the necessity for action, he went below. There he took the little money he possessed, in a small wallet, and wrapping it in a handkerchief, fastened it inside his shirt; he made sure that he had his pocket-knife and watch, and put on his best suit, with the thought that perhaps he should be forced to sell some of his clothing, and he might as well realize all he could.

"I'm a beggar now," he laughed, "or will be soon, for I have very little money, and just this watch I received for Christmas. I ought to be able to get a lot of food for these brass buttons on my coat, if I offer them to some Jamaican. A good green broadcloth coat—I wonder how much I

should expect for it? Or for these calfskin boots? I haven't gone barefoot for some time, but it should come easy to me again. Now I'll go up and face Mr. Hamill and that villainous Captain Brade. I only hope that Mr. Hamill doesn't think to ask me my opinion of our little game—I'd give it to him, and my opinion of him, too."

Fortunately for Ginger, Mr. Hamill did not seem at all worried as to what the boy's ultimate conclusion must be.

Ginger appeared on deck and waited, a little apart, for the anchor to be dropped and the boat lowered, wearing as bland an expression on his tanned face as he could assume. He experienced a momentary worry lest he should not be expected to land at all, but this fear proved groundless, for Mr. Hamill was faithfully executing his duty in showing Ginger all angles of Mr. Armstrong's trade.

The *Silver Wing* lay in a wide lagoon, a still blue expanse of water with a narrow

opening, with limestone cliffs and dense forests, curving on all sides, that cut off the view of the ocean. Long ferns and trailing parasitic vines, decked with ornate flowers, drooped from the leaning trees and dipped into the water; the cries of birds and the whir of insects were the only distinguishable sounds. The air was full of humid fragrance, and the tang of the sea was absorbed in the warm atmosphere which hung over the tropic growth. It was a solitary harbor, deep enough to float a vessel the size of the *Silver Wing*, and concealed as though made for such a purpose as the one on which they came. An ideal rendezvous for buccaneers, thought Ginger, and very probably once so used. Jamaica had formerly received many a pirate on her shores.

"Don't they keep a lookout?" demanded Captain Brade, irritably. "Why aren't Maynard and Keep here to meet us?"

Scarcely had he spoken, when from out

of the impenetrable tangle of leaves and flowers, a rowboat magically appeared. Ginger would have thought it had floated off the land and been rowed through the forest, but he knew that a stream or inlet lay hidden somewhere. The boat was rowed by two negroes, their heads tied in colored bandanas, their black backs and shoulders bare, gleaming in the sun as they pulled away from the shadows and made for the *Silver Wing*. Three men sat in the boat, their high hats and conventional coats and vests, as seen from the deck of the vessel, looking strangely out of place in that barbaric wilderness. Shouts passed back and forth.

“Good day, Hamill!” one of the men called in a stentorian voice, while still some distance away. “Any fair news from home?”

This man, Ginger perceived, wore gold earrings, and had a heavy black beard and mustache. He looked more in keeping

with the surroundings than his fellows, who might have been ordinary law-abiding merchants.

"How's the great ivory trader?" Mr. Hamill shouted back.

"I've left that, unless it's *black* ivory, you mean," was the response.

Ginger was expecting the men to come aboard, but Captain Brade spoke a few words to the supercargo, then gave the word to lower the boat, and down it went, and one by one, the Captain, Mr. Hamill, Ginger, the mate, and two sailors climbed in.

Ginger looked dubiously toward the shore—tracking his way through the Island until he landed at the nearest port, was not a very inviting prospect; it might be adventurous, but Ginger was too sensible to be affected by false glamour.

The two boats came together, and more greetings were exchanged.

"This is Master Wade, Armstrong's clerk," introduced Mr. Hamill to the three

men, who were regarding the youth with evident surprise. "He's here to learn how we do things, as Mr. Armstrong has a strong mind to bring him up in his business and advance him to something useful. He's a bright lad, if he does have some foolish notions."

"Stick by Mr. Armstrong, boy," said the man with the earrings, heartily, "and you'll never regret it. Glad to see you along. Now let's be getting on, Hamill, if you will. We were a little slow in coming down to meet you, but we'll make up for lost hospitality when we reach the plantation. Get along, you niggers! Pull those oars, dogs!"

They shot ahead, the boat from the *Silver Wing* a few yards in the rear. Almost to the very mouth of the river which was to be their course, Ginger could not detect the exact point where they were to leave the lagoon; then the shadow of an opening appeared, and bending low to avoid sweeping boughs while creepers caught and trailed

from the lifted oars, they slid into the comparative gloom of the forest. Where the sun could penetrate through the close-woven canopy, it struck gold and green lights on the undergrowth; orchids looped in delicate festoons, beautiful enough to be their own excuse for living on other plants; tree ferns swayed their airy fronds as a sea-breeze passed overhead; an iguana crawled out of sight at the approach of the boats.

"Now is the time to keep my eyes wide open," Ginger reminded himself, leaning forward and scanning the country through which they passed. "I wonder if there are any paths to that town the mate spoke of? I shouldn't see them from here, though, and this country looks perfectly wild. We must be headed for some large plantation; my best chance, I think, will come when we have arrived. I may be able to slip away into the woods and make off as fast as I can—better still, if I could only manage to conceal myself somewhere near by, until they

are through searching for me, as they will surely do. I don't see any but the slimmest chance for me to break away, but I'll take any risk rather than go back on a slave-ship, sharing in this work—even in a passive way."

Ginger set his teeth and waited. He was realizing more than ever the trap into which he had been thrust, but his temper was thoroughly roused, and he stubbornly refused to see failure.

The jungle-like growth grew thinner, the stream wider; larger trees appeared, and they passed clearings studded with stumps, where lumber had been cut down. Then on both sides of the stream burst the dazzling light of a clear sky, and fields of sugar-cane spread out in all directions. Ahead lay more trees, and from their well laid out aspect, Ginger concluded correctly that they surrounded the houses of the plantation.

"Almost there," Mr. Keep, one of the

men in the first boat called. "We'll have plenty to drink and eat in a hurry."

Ginger watched the approach to the house with the feeling of a man about to plunge into icy water. There it was, a large white dwelling, festooned under great heaps of bougainvillea and climbing roses, set back of an ill-kept lawn of Bermuda grass. Slaves clothed in ragged scraps of cotton waited on the landing-place, pigeons fluttered through the air, dogs barked, the low tumble-down roofs of the slave quarters were seen back of the house. The negroes on the landing had a sulky, hang-dog air.

"How long are we going to stay here?" Ginger inquired. "Aren't we going to load right away?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Hamill. "We'll stop for some refreshments, and discuss business a little. The gang is all chained and ready—we'll sail by nightfall."

"But not with me," thought Ginger as the boat bumped against the landing.

CHAPTER XVII

GINGER ESCAPES

GINGER walked toward the house, between Mr. Hamill and the man with the earrings, who was Mr. Maynard, the owner of the sugar plantation. The other men followed close in their wake, and Ginger had the feeling of being hemmed in on all sides.

“Not that I intend to start running for the woods in full view of every one,” he thought, “but I wish a quick chance would present itself for leaving me alone.”

He looked toward the rear of the house, wondering where the chained captives were kept; but he saw only a few stray negroes, miserably dressed, and, even at that distance, thin and unkempt in appearance. They crossed the wide veranda and entered the

cool interior of the house, where Ginger's first concern was to observe that the numerous windows were not very high above the ground, and if need be, he could easily vault through one of them.

"Glad to get in from the sun!" exclaimed Captain Brade, mopping his head with a silk handkerchief. "It's cool in here. You've not a bad place, Maynard."

"Good enough," replied Mr. Maynard, sprawling into a rattan chair and waving his hand carelessly for his guests to seat themselves likewise. "Kind of run down, and everything is old and worn. But I'm not living in it for the sake of admiring the furniture or the beautiful grounds."

"How does the sugar-cane pay?" asked Mr. Hamill with a broad wink—the only sign of levity Ginger had ever seen him display.

Mr. Maynard laughed heartily, displaying gleaming teeth that made him look more like a pirate than ever. "It just about

keeps us in snuff; *you* know how the money's earned!"

They all laughed, and two negro women brought in trays with cool drinks and cakes and bread and cold meat.

"Eat all you've a mind to, gentlemen," urged Mr. Keep. "Our friend Maynard here is growing so rich he can afford to treat us well."

"I've had about enough of this country," said Mr. Maynard. "It's better than it was on the African coast, but it gets monotonous, and I'm ready for a change."

"Well, you've made enough—you can afford to lean back and enjoy yourself," agreed Mr. Hamill.

"Not until after the next two or maybe three ship-loads, at least. I've got a thousand slaves coming in here next month, and everything's arranged to send them out."

"You won't get a thousand, though," put in Mr. Keep. "So many always die on the way."

"Yes, they've a steady habit of doing that," said Mr. Maynard, callously. "But there are plenty more where they came from. Why, gentlemen, there is a real fortune in the African trade for a fellow that's enterprising!" He switched around suddenly and looked square at Ginger, who was quietly eating and drinking. "Are you going to make your fortune this way, young sir? We're the men to show you how!"

Ginger did not want to reply, and he knew very well that what he would like to say would not please Mr. Maynard at all. He contented himself with:

"I know nothing about it."

"I understand that; but you'll learn," declared his questioner, turning his attention to the others.

Ginger need not have chafed so impatiently, for they rose soon enough. His uneasiness grew, as it seemed to him that Mr. Hamill took a perverse interest in placing himself at his elbow, but he was as deter-

mined as ever to escape—more so, if that were possible. Would he succeed? He wondered over and over, as they left the house, once more crossing the veranda and coming into the glare and heat of the sun. A dirt-path beaten flat by the constant padding of bare feet ran from the flight of side-steps which they descended, to the sprinkle of huts in the rear.

Two negro men stood in the middle of this path, watching the group from the house approach. All at once these two turned and ran quickly out of sight among the huts.

“What’s the matter with the dogs?” muttered Mr. Maynard, frowning. “Sulky beasts—lately,” he said in a low voice to Mr. Hamill, caught by Ginger. “I don’t want it mentioned, but I’m a little worried ——” he broke off, for Captain Brade and one of his own men were too near.

“They look worse than sulky to me,” thought Ginger, who from a life among

them could read a negro's face. "Every one I've seen so far has had an injured, resentful expression on his or her face. I believe they are ready to make trouble."

Again he gazed alertly around him, taking in the position of the cane-fields and the forest and the river. Absorbed in this, he missed the ensuing conversation between the supercargo and Mr. Maynard, and was surprised at being addressed by the latter.

"Master Wade, you can accompany my overseer with the gang to the ship, where you are to check off the number that goes aboard—I don't think you can get them all in, although Mr. Hamill here says there's more stowage on the *Silver Wing* this trip than there was last trip, when she had other truck aboard; but cram them as tight as you can, and if there's any left, we'll keep them over for the next trip."

"Why can't some one else do that?" exclaimed Ginger. "It ought not to be my duty. I sailed only to watch how Mr.

Hamill does the business, not to take an active part myself."

"According to Mr. Armstrong, you were to make yourself useful when possible; that is what he instructed me. We have some papers to sign, and we're anxious to hurry this business. It would take too long to send Captain Brade or the mate or myself—you don't want to shirk, do you?"

They had come to a halt, and Ginger faced Mr. Maynard coolly.

"I won't have anything to do with your slaves," he stated.

There was a moment's surprised silence.

"D'you think you can back out now?" snarled Mr. Hamill, dropping for the first time his dignified pose. "You young whippersnapper! We don't stand for nonsense like this, I tell you!"

"You'd better see which side your bread is buttered on," advised Mr. Maynard. "Don't be a fool, lad. You can quarrel with Armstrong when you get home, but

this isn't the place to get out of what you don't like."

"I told you once, and I mean it. You're all crooked, and I want nothing to do with you." Ginger set his jaw decisively.

Mr. Maynard's face darkened, and the others all started to talk at once, some urging Ginger to agree—Keep was one of these—and the captain loudest in impatient advice to "throw the boy in irons and have done with him."

The supercargo grasped Ginger's arm and shook it, waving his forefinger under the boy's nose.

"You do as you're bid," he shouted, "and this is the last time I'll ask!"

"Drop my arm, sir," cried Ginger angrily, wrenching free. "I'm not one of your slaves!"

"He'll have to be put in irons," said Mr. Maynard decisively.

The captain made a threatening movement, and Ginger backed away.

“Look there!” he cried, pointing suddenly at the house, and taken by surprise, every one turned his head. Ginger had long legs, and he made the most of them; he was already several yards on his way to the woods, when his flight was perceived.

“Rogue!” bawled out the captain in his booming voice. “After him!”

Ginger saw a quick vision of himself in irons in the dark hold of the *Silver Wing*, and increased his effort, trusting as a last hope to his superior lightness and speed to get him out of sight. The green undergrowth already brushed him, when a medley of the weirdest shouts and cries he had ever heard burst out upon the air, and the whole plantation rang with pandemonium. Before he could stop himself from looking, Ginger had turned his head, and hope leaped within him. The pursuing men had halted uncertainly, all intent on the scene behind them, Ginger forgotten.

The slaves had risen!

Black men and women were running toward the group, brandishing sticks, staves, stones, any kind of weapon that they could lay hands on. A terrible clanking and rattling of chains rose from some hidden place, accompanied by savage yells and shrieks. Captain Brade pulled out a pistol, and Ginger knew that the other men were armed, too. But he did not stay to watch the contest, for he would be mistaken for one of the oppressors.

"Now for it!" he panted, and knowing only that the nearest town lay somewhere inland, and that he must get away before either side won, he kept on through the hot density of the wilderness.

CHAPTER XVIII

BACK IN KINGSTON

AUNT MALLY, who was sitting placidly in front of her little cottage, threw her hands in the air, and cried:

“Lawd hab mercy on us all! Ef it ain’t Auntie’s Ginger! Ma honey chile, what in de world is de matter? Look at dem clo’es!”

“H’lo, Aunt Mally,” greeted Ginger cheerfully, if wearily, while she treated him to a warm embrace and several loud smacks on each cheek. “Your no-account boy has turned up again, you see. Why, hello, Lop!”

Attracted by Aunt Mally’s loud exclamations of greeting, the mulatto boy had appeared in the shade of the doorway, a chunk of bread in one hand, and a pig’s foot in

the other, his mouth stuffed with both, which he forgot to chew as his jaw dropped.

Ginger slumped down on the broad stone doorstep, and leaned back against the wall.

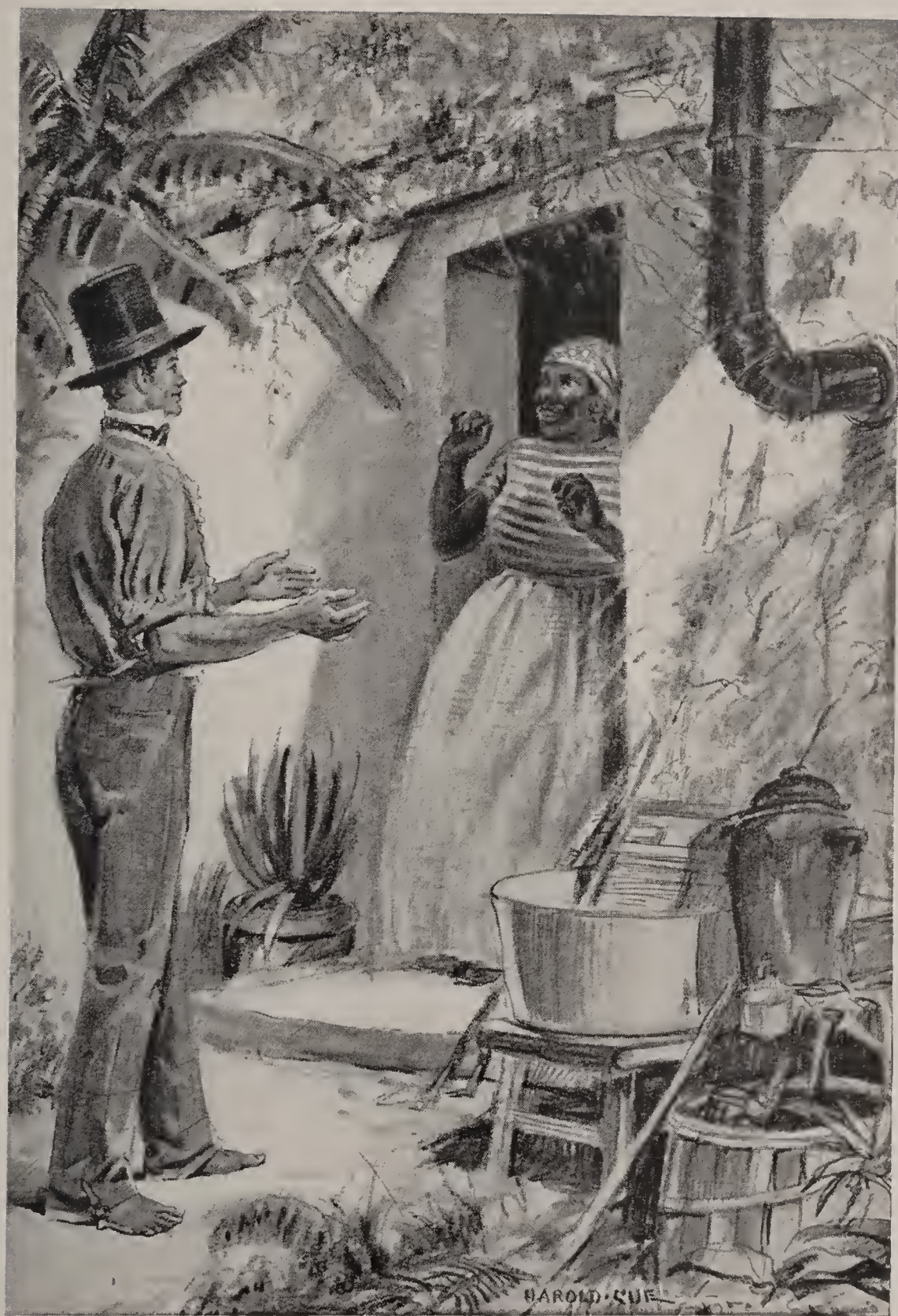
"I think I've walked across the whole Island," he declared listlessly, "or almost."

"Wait an' I'll bring you a nice cool drink and somethin' to eat! I know you is hungry ——" and Aunt Mally hurried indoors as fast as lameness and habitual indolence would allow.

"I jes' can't believe it's you!" declared Lop, swallowing his food and finding his tongue at last. "I thought you was in New England, a-workin' for old man Armstrong."

"I was," replied Ginger, "but now I'm not."

Ginger was a bedraggled sight. He was covered with dust and dirt where he had slept on the ground, his shirt the color of mud, its once starched and frilled ruffles



“EF IT AIN’T AUNTIE’S GINGER!”—Page 219.

dangling limply. Gone was the broadcloth coat, the vest, and the calfskin boots—all exchanged along the way for food. His fine beaver hat he had managed to keep, fearing sunstroke, and it reposed grandly above the tramp-like aspect of the rest of his attire.

“ I just want to lie down and sleep forever,” he announced.

“ Land, then you’re the same Ginger you always was,” laughed Lop. “ C’mon inside where’s cool and tell us what you’re a-doin’ in this rig? ”

“ What are *you* doing here? ” asked Ginger, dragging himself to his feet and entering the familiar, dusky jumble of Aunt Mally’s house.

“ Beggin’ a meal offen your mammy as usual,” cheerily responded Lop. “ Set down, stranger! Welcome home! ”

“ Chile, I nebber did expect to see you no mo’ ! ” Aunt Mally was saying, with much head-shaking, as she got a meal to-

gether. "An' I'se missed you quite a bit, too, Ginger."

"That's why I come over here to cheer her up," put in Lop, with a comical wink at Ginger.

"Yes, you no-'count, lazy good-fer-nothin'—all you does is eat!"

Food and drink heartened Ginger considerably, and he began to feel more like himself.

"I've made a mess of everything," he told them. "Not I, either, but Mr. Armstrong put me in a position ——"

"Tell it from the beginnin'!" interrupted Lop. "Them's pretty good clothes for a bond-boy, 'specially if you was workin' for Armstrong, and whatcha doin' in Jamaica?"

So Ginger began at the very start, and told them all about his life in Salem; of how he learned through Persis's help, and of how Mr. Armstrong decided to give him a chance at something worth while; and

then of the trip on the *Silver Wing*, of the knowledge that they were going to carry a cargo of slaves, and the subsequent adventure at the plantation.

“And I’ve just tramped and tramped since,” he concluded, “not caring much about where I went, only I knew you’d take me in, Aunt Mally, and give me time to think about the future. Once I got a ride in a team, but I’ve done nothing but walk the rest of the trip; and after a year spent in sitting on a stool bent over a desk, I’m not in the best trim for such a lot of exercise all at once. Nearly every place I’ve come through I’ve been stared at as if I were a queer animal such as people had never seen before, and I guess I do look kind of funny, marching along with a fine hat on my head and a lot of ruffles on my dirty shirt, and no shoes or coat! One place they wanted to arrest me as a runaway; I don’t know what they thought I was running away from, as I don’t look much like

a sailor; but I gave an officer my watch, and he decided I was harmless so long as I was leaving right away. So here I am, back in good old Kingston!"

"That wicked Massa Armstrong had orter be killed!" cried Aunt Mally. "He ain't treated you nowise right a bit! An' jes' to think ob you standin' up befo' all dem men de way you done!"

Lop shook his head in a mystified manner. "You sure went crazy about work! Learnin' all them books and what not, without havin' to—you didn't used to be like that, Ginger. I know *I'll* never leave Jamaica. Work must be ketchin' in the States."

"Yes, and after all my efforts, look at me now." Ginger put his hand through a rent in one cuff. "I'm sort of worried about what Mr. Armstrong is going to do when he finds out what's happened. He's some kind of a great-uncle of mine, and my employer. I don't know just what rights he

has over me. None, I hope. But he can do so much just through influence ——”

“Now, Ginger,” interposed Aunt Mally heartily, “you ain’t a-goin’ to worry none about dat, leastways not till you is all rested up. Nobody don’t need bother you, an’ you kin sleep an’ eat all you is a mind to. Jes’ wait and do all your worryin’ later.”

“It’ll be quite a while before old man Armstrong kin hear about all this rumpus,” said Lop, “and when he does, it’ll be some more time before the news kin git back here to Kingston. Besides, maybe them men back at the plantation was all killed—prob’ly was, with all them niggers after ’em. That means some more time, don’t it?”

“No, because the *Silver Wing* was anchored there, and the men aboard would soon find out what had happened, and they’d make for the nearest port, which would be Falmouth; then it wouldn’t be so long before Mr. Armstrong knew it all.”

"Well, I guess you're right. Anyways, you'd better do as Aunt Mally says."

"I'm going to, and I don't need to be urged, either. Where's my old bed, Aunt Mally? I never thought I'd be back in it in three years, when I bound out for seven!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE OLD LIFE AGAIN

THE following day found Ginger his usual self, cheery and optimistic. After breakfast and a thorough cleaning up, he settled himself on the doorstep, while Aunt Mally took her habitual station in an old chair, half in and half out of the door. Through the screen of palm-trees he could see the roadway beyond the garden, and a string of burros trotting by.

"Here's dat no-'count nigger," sniffed Aunt Mally. "I jes' knowed he couldn't keep away long."

Lop swaggered down the flower-choked path and plumped himself cross-legged in the grass.

"Mornin', Ginger! How's the boy? Got callouses on yo' feet?"

"I certainly have. I've had enough of walking for a lifetime."

Ginger surveyed his friend with interest, and to all general appearances Lop had not changed in the two years since Ginger had last seen him. He had shot up tall, but he was still lean and loose-jointed and his good-humored yellow face and twinkling eyes were the same as ever.

"You're not a bit different," Ginger told him. "I feel as though I'd changed an awful lot."

"No, nor I won't ever be," replied Lop, lazily pulling the petals off of a rose dangling above his head. "I've been a-settin' on the wharf ever since you left."

"You don' tole me dat you worked a while las' month," declared Aunt Mally. "Was you a-tellin' fibs now, or was you a-tellin' de trufe?"

"Land, yes, I did try workin'," confessed Lop, almost shamefacedly. "Prob'ly I was thinkin' of you, Ginger, when I let myself

in for a job o' work down at Mr. Marks's store. I must 'a' been crazy, thinkin' I'd enjoy liftin' watermelons and measurin' out fruit all day! One week was a plenty, an' I wouldn't 'a' stayed that long only I wanted this yaller handkercher here—pretty, ain't it? An' I bought a good knife, too." He pulled his treasures out of a back pocket and displayed them proudly.

"That's a good knife," Ginger said admiringly, "and the handkerchief is bright enough, isn't it? Those purple spots remind me of the bandana I left with—do you remember the bundle I carried? I've still got it, with everything I brought except the shirt, which I wore out—yes, and the figs Aunt Mally gave me."

"Red, wasn't it? I remember."

"I nebber did think as how I'd miss you much," Aunt Mally remarked all at once in her placid way, "but I guess as how folks gets awful attached. I'se thought ob you mos' every day, Ginger."

"It's nice to find I've been missed," smiled Ginger. "You didn't know I'd be back to visit you so soon, did you?"

"No," grinned Lop, "when you went off away from here I thought that was the last I'd ever clap eyes on you—I didn't envy you none, settin' out for the cold the way you was!"

"It was pretty chilly at first," admitted Ginger, remembering the chilblains of that first winter, "but I'm accustomed to it now. I believe I like the cold winters—snow is lots of fun, Lop."

"Maybe, but give me sunshine, an' lots of it!"

"I guess I've changed a lot," Ginger remarked, as he had before.

"Yes, in a way you have," admitted Lop. "But I wouldn't have no trouble recognizin' you—you're mostly bigger, that's all. You've sure got lots of muscle now."

"I'm just about as tall as I'll ever be."

"You look the same, only ——" Lop

squinted and rubbed his frizzly head, as if in perplexity to express something he saw.

“You’re the same, only different.”

Ginger laughed at this.

“I’m tellin’ you,” went on Lop, shaking his head sagely. “Your face don’t look so much different, except maybe becuz you’ve been washin’ it every day, but you’ve got another kind of an expression, someway. I guess all that work you talk about’s kinder made you change. I sure am glad I stayed right here.”

“Yes, and it looks as if I might as well have stuck here, too,” said Ginger. “I’m not any better off right this minute than if I had. Well—I suppose I shouldn’t say that.” He thought of his schooling by way of Persis, and of many other things he had learned in Salem. He understood, in a little way, what Lop meant when he said he had changed in his expression.

“Now, honey, I want to know about dat Massa Armstrong,” began Aunt Mally.

And Ginger had to tell most of his story over again, for his audience was full of questions and remarks, and the fruitful field of his past endeavors could be mulled over and over again, a fresh and absorbing topic to both Lop and Aunt Mally. They both agreed heartily that Ginger had not been treated fairly by his employer, and they both exclaimed admiringly over the boy's bravery in standing up against those hard men.

"That wasn't anything," Ginger protested. "I just wasn't going along with them, that's all. You know red hair makes a fellow stubborn, so they used to tell me."

"My, but yo' Aunt Mally is proud ob you," Aunt Mally persisted, beaming at him from her round black face.

Lop shook his head—it was all too much for him to comprehend. "But I guess you know what you're doin'," he would say with his flashing grin.

Salem, with its formal, decorous homes

and well-ordered lives, seemed very far away. As Ginger sat among fragrant flowers, in the midst of the lazy Island life, the three years of New England existence slipped away into the distance and left him back where he was in the old days, with a future as blank now as it had been when he never gave it a thought. The illusion of a return to the old life remained with him several days. He went down to the docks with Lop, watching the ships sail in and out as he used to before he left Kingston. He greeted old friends, his red hair easily recognized anywhere, although they told him he had grown up a good deal and otherwise changed in appearance. Of course, every one wanted to know why he was back and when he had come in, and how he had left his tenure of service. Ginger was puzzled as to what he ought to say, so he confined himself to the fact that he had been promoted by Mr. Armstrong, but that he had had a disagreement with him and was

obliged to leave his service. No, he did not know just what he was going to do yet. This explanation was sketchy enough to create something of a mystery, but he refused to go into details, and his acquaintances soon gave up questioning him, and accepted his return quietly, doubtless thinking that the true story would become known in due time. If he had had trouble with his employer, naturally he wouldn't want to talk about it. And every one knew what a hard master Mr. Armstrong was—all their sympathies were on Ginger's side, whatever the trouble had been.

Ginger knew that the slave rising at Maynard's plantation would soon be public knowledge, and in that event, Mr. Armstrong's connection with slave-running would be learned. For his own sake, Ginger thought it better not to say anything to expose his employer, since circumstance would accomplish that soon enough. The information that Obed Armstrong was en-

gaged in this trade would excite little notice in Kingston, so far as that went, but Ginger wanted to keep himself apart from it all. He thought often of Persis, and for her sake, if for no other, he resolved to say nothing. He wished that she might never learn of her father's doings, but he feared that such ignorance would not be possible forever. She was so kind and gentle that it would hurt her—but he knew that she loved her father dearly, and probably she would find some way to excuse him. Thinking of her, Ginger decided that he would try to avoid, in so far as he could, saying anything at all against his former employer.

Ginger slipped into the familiar, lazy round of existence, the care-free, idle days, the lingering sunny hours—and suddenly discovered that he was not, could not be, contented or happy.

“Three years is a short time, but it's fixed me for this do-nothing life,” he thought, lying in the shade of a logwood-tree and

watching a lizard catch flies on the cottage wall. "I must naturally be one of those industrious, energetic people who are always stirring themselves up about something. I can't live like this—I don't enjoy it, and what's more, I'm not going to keep it up. It was all right once, but not any more. Lop is a good friend, and it's fun to talk to the sailors and all that. But I'd like to read a book for a change, or chat with somebody like Persis—our evenings together were lots of fun."

He recalled the beautifully furnished mansion, Miss Liddy and Caleb, the carefully served meals, the air of refinement that breathed through the household. It had all made a much deeper impression on him than he had ever realized at the time.

"I'm spoiled completely. I might as well realize it now. The thing for me to do is to quit lying under this tree and try to hunt up a job. I ought to be thankful to

take anything, but I'm trained now as a clerk—I wonder if there isn't something in an office here in Kingston? ”

Vaguely, he wanted to go back to New England, and he thought in a distant way that there were many ports besides Salem—there was Boston, for example—where he might try to get into the shipping business again. That would depend, possibly, on Obed Armstrong. If he wanted to black-ball Ginger, he could very conceivably do so, for his name and influence counted a great deal all along the Atlantic seaboard. This thought was like a dark shadow, and he put it out of his mind for the time being. In the meanwhile, Ginger felt that he must go to work and earn some money.

“ So I can be independent,” he told Lop, who could not see it at all. “ I don't want to live on Aunt Mally any more than I have to—you know that's the way I began to feel when I left here to go to Salem. I wanted to get out for myself, and it's what I want

now. I'd like to get into some office, where perhaps I can have an opportunity to do better by and by."

Lop scratched his frizzly head wonderingly.

"I b'lieve you're crazy," he grinned, "but go ahead. I don't see why you don't want to stay with Aunt Mally so long as she'll let you, but you're doin' this, an' I suppose you knows what you wants. I hope you has good luck, but don't kill yourself workin'."

"Don't worry about that!" laughed Ginger, slapping Lop on the back. "I'll take an easy job if I can get one. I want money so I can go back to New England if I want to, and I shall have to work for that, you know."

"Go back to that freezin' place you done told me about? Boy, you got awful queer notions."

"Maybe I have, Lop. Still, I like Salem."

Aunt Mally received the news that he was going to look for work with her usual placid calm.

“I don’t care what you does,” she said, “so long as you is happy. You can stay here all you is a mind to, but if you wants to work, I guess as how it’s good for a person.” And she leaned back in her chair and folded her hands tranquilly.

Thus it came about that Ginger made inquiries throughout Kingston for a position in some office. Within a month of his arrival at Aunt Mally’s doorstep, his energy was rewarded, and he went to work as a clerk for a trading association. Endeavoring not to let his setback quench his ambition any, Ginger went at his new job steadily and willingly. There was nothing especially hopeful about it—he was merely one of a number of clerks who had charge of the simplest routine of the business; but he hoped that if he persevered, there might be some sort of promotion in the future, or

he might hear of something better elsewhere.

"I can be thankful for this position," he told Aunt Mally. "If Mr. Whitlock hadn't known me ever since he'd been in Jamaica, which is since I was about three years old, I'd never have been hired by his firm. It's just a lucky chance and I'm glad of it. You see, I'm sort of under a cloud, because I haven't explained to anybody why I left Mr. Armstrong's service. Everybody thinks there must have been some kind of a row between us, and that I had to leave—of course that's true, but I know it must sound kind of queer. I could tell, when I asked Mr. Whitlock for this position, that he was thinking about that. I told him the kind of work I had done in Mr. Armstrong's office, but I wouldn't say anything about why I returned in such a hurry. I was afraid he wasn't going to give me this job, but finally he said that he would try me out. It's because he's known me so long,

I suppose, and fortunately for me, nobody around here thinks very much of Mr. Armstrong."

What Mr. Armstrong might or might not do, became a far-off event. As the quiet weeks passed, and Ginger settled into the unvarying round of his new duties, he almost ceased to think of his former employer. Indeed, he deliberately banished from mind the memory of his other work. He wanted all his energies for the future, and not for the past. In due time, the news was brought into Kingston of the uprising at the Maynard sugar-cane plantation, and it was known that the vessel had been the *Silver Wing*, and that the mate and one of the two sailors who had gone on land with Mr. Hamill had managed to escape, and had gained their ship at anchor. Apparently it was not known that there had been such a boy on board, but every one in Kingston knew that Ginger had come back.

Of Persis, however, Ginger often thought,

and the congenial life at the Armstrong home he could not help recalling with increased regret.

"I want a home like that," he said to himself, "and I would like to be able to make friends with people who read books and talk about interesting things, the way Persis and I did. Of course, this is a better climate, but Massachusetts is a good place to live in."

Thus the weeks and months slipped by in the same regular routine. Ginger got along well with his new employer and his fellow-workers, and although what he had to do was not very inspiring, he plodded along fairly contentedly. His dream of some day owning his own ships had received a severe jolt, but he did not give up the idea—he still pictured himself with vessels like the *Silver Wing* at his command—but he was beginning to realize how hard it was going to be for him to reach his goal.

Then a letter came for Ginger.

CHAPTER XX

GINGER'S DREAMS COME TRUE

“It’s from Salem, Massachusetts,” said Mr. Whitlock, who brought the letter personally to Ginger. “It was sent in my care—evidently some one has discovered where you are at work.”

“Thank you,” murmured Ginger, mechanically, as he took the letter.

He was just getting ready to go home for the night—he had been standing at his desk putting on his coat, when Mr. Whitlock had appeared. The light was fading, and Ginger carried the letter to an open window, where the sunset lingered in long bars like stained glass.

“This is not Mr. Armstrong’s writing,” thought Ginger, his first quick fear being that it was from his former employer. “I ought to be ashamed of myself,” he added

scornfully, breaking the seals and spreading open several closely covered pages. "I must be a big coward, all right, if a letter can make me feel nervous!"

His first thought was for the name of his correspondent, and he glanced at the bottom of the last sheet.

"John W. Eaton, Attorney."

John W. Eaton? That was the name of Mr. Armstrong's lawyer—Ginger had seen him in the office back in Salem. This must be something grave!

With his mind full of trials, fines, imprisonments, and other legal terrors, Ginger read the letter, sure that any or all of these fears must be threatening him. He read it so hastily, with this idea in mind, that he could not fully understand just what it really meant, it was so utterly different from what he had supposed. He read it again, this time more slowly and carefully than before.

One sentence loomed above all the others:

“ . . . Mr. Obed Armstrong died on the twenty-first day of this month, toward evening. His mind was quite clear up to the time when he lapsed into the final unconsciousness.”

Persis's father dead! Ginger could hardly read on fast enough.

“ Although much crippled by rheumatism, as you know, Mr. Armstrong was very hale and healthy for his age, and his sudden stroke, illness, and death came as a shock to us all. In his last hours, he appeared to regret certain courses which he had taken in his life, under the influence of the desire for money. Of these things, I need speak in no greater detail, for you know of them yourself. The *Silver Wing* came into Salem just a week before Mr. Armstrong's demise, and we heard what had taken place in Jamaica. It will not be news to you, I suppose, to learn that the first mate and one sailor managed to escape from the uprising of slaves and got away to their ship—you have doubtless heard of this already in Kingston.

“ It was from these men that we obtained the story of your desertion. Of Mr. Arm-

strong's first anger I need not tell, for that is past now. The softening influence of approaching death, together with a conversation which he seems to have had with his beloved daughter after she heard of the business he had been engaged in, changed his heart, and I have now only good to relate of his final actions—let us trust that his repentance was full and sincere, and that his many errors are atoned for.

"As you may guess, Mr. Armstrong's entire fortune has been willed to his daughter, with the exception of various small bequests to a number of relatives, among whom you have your share. His great trading interests are to be taken over by a company which will manage them for Miss Armstrong.

"Mr. Winters Armstrong, the brother of the deceased, has been appointed guardian for her, and will head the company which takes over the business. I received information, just before writing you this letter, of your present location with Mr. Whitlock. The *Esperanza* docked yesterday and brought news from Jamaica, and as the captain seems to have been an old friend of yours in time past, he was able to tell us all about you. Although you have, no doubt, found a good situation, I believe that you will be glad to resume your old position in

the office of the Armstrong Company. It is with great pleasure that I inform you that this was one of Mr. Armstrong's last requests. In conversation with his brother, who was fortunately here from Boston at this most critical time, Mr. Obed Armstrong expressed his regret for that turn in his affairs which had necessitated forcing you into a trade which he himself now found a burden on his own soul. As a sort of restitution to you, as well as because of his high opinion of your abilities, he requested that you be taken into the company and advanced as rapidly as possible. I imagine, Master Wade, that the friendship between you and his daughter had something to do with influencing this decision and the earnest desire he showed. . . ."

Ginger dropped the letter for a moment and gazed out at the setting sun. The harbor was a sea of orange light, in which floated gilded vessels from a dream-world. Every sail looked white and cloud-like, every mast was touched with the rosy glow of sunset. In a little over a week, if sailing were fair, the brig *Pernambuco* would be coming into Kingston harbor from Salem,

and he was to go home—yes, Salem *had* been home to him! All his hopes and dreams were there, and his life, henceforth, would be centered in New England.

“Good-bye, Jamaica, for good!” he wanted to shout out loud. “I’m going back to learn shipping at Salem, and I’m going to own my own ships some day, and *then* I’ll come back here to visit!”

As joyful as on that other occasion when he had received his first promotion, Ginger dashed from the building and ran all the way to Aunt Mally’s, disregarding the people he passed, all of whom stared at him in wonder as he raced by.

“I’ve nothing but good to think of Mr. Armstrong,” he declared excitedly, at the end of a warm recital of the letter. “He was a miser and a slave-runner while he lived, but he’s gone now, and he was sorry for it all on his death-bed—there’ll be no more poor blacks starved aboard the Armstrong ships! And think of Persis with all

that fortune—it couldn't be in better hands!”

In his enthusiasm, Ginger whirled Aunt Mally round and round the room, saying at the same time:

“I'm going to send you money, Auntie, so you'll be sure to have plenty to live on in comfort!”

And Aunt Mally panted and kept repeating:

“Lawsy, hab mercy on de chile!”

One week passed, and then once more Ginger bade farewell to Lop, and left him sitting, as before, on the sunny wharf, waving good-bye with his perpetual good-humored smile.

The *Pernambuco* was a fast vessel, but to Ginger's impatience it seemed as if she crept slower than any garden snail. But even the slowest voyage comes to an end, and Southern waters were at last left behind.

Ginger stood on the Salem dock and heard the familiar pounding of the tide at

the green piles—he walked up the well-known street—he passed the office, where Mr. Armstrong's name still hung on the old sign—he walked under the elm-trees where he had often raked the driveway clear—he was on the doorstep of the great white house, waiting for Miss Liddy to answer his knock.

"Yes, this is home," he thought, with a feeling of satisfaction in his heart, as he looked around at the familiar trees and flowers.

If he could have had any doubt as to his welcome, it was dispelled when the door opened, and he was greeted, not by Miss Liddy as he expected, but by Persis.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come!" she said simply. "You don't belong in Jamaica. We need you here, Ginger!"

THE END

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